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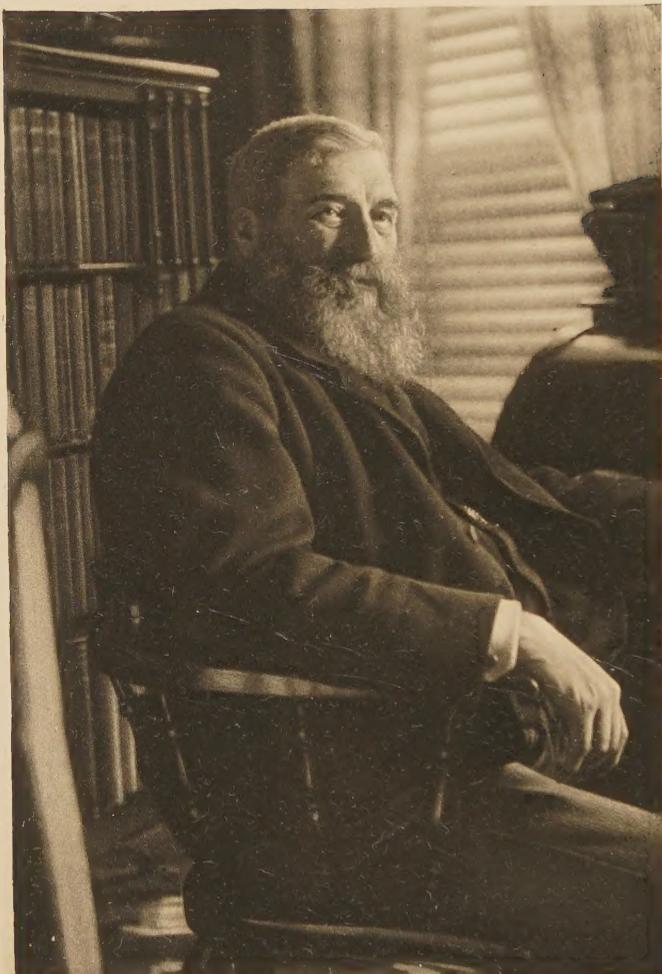


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THEATRICAL NOTES.

Two hundred and fifty copies.

No. 28



Yours sincerely
J. H. Steele
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THEATRICAL NOTES

BY

JOSEPH KNIGHT



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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE substance of the following work has appeared in the *Athenæum*, from the pages of which periodical it is with permission reprinted. It does not aim at supplying a full chronicle of the London stage during the period which it covers, notices of very many pieces of ephemeral nature or interest having been excised. Should this contribution to stage history prove acceptable, materials are in hand for a second volume, which will bring the matter up to date and link the drama of Byron, Wills and Albery with that of Mr. Pinero, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones and Mr. Grundy. Notices of French performances in London occupy a portion of the work larger than may perhaps appear desirable. It must be remembered, however, that the renascence of acting and of interest in the stage which the present generation has witnessed is to some extent due to the education afforded the public by the visits of foreign companies of world-wide renown, and the consequent demand for acting, which, though common now, a generation ago was not to be obtained.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE average of a generation is held to be somewhat over thirty years. During that period the writer of these notes has watched with close interest the progress and development of the stage in England. Thirty years constitute a long time as regards human observation and artistic progress. The first thirty years of the acted drama carry us from Ferrex and Porrex or Gammer Gurton's "Needle" to Marlowe's "Edward II." ; another "generation" gives us the first folio Shakspeare. As civilisation proceeds, alteration is less evident. None the less, the last thirty years of the English stage have witnessed more than one change, amounting practically to revolution. Public interest in things theatrical, at the outset slumbering and apparently extinct, has flamed out afresh. The dramatist, once the most underpaid of literary craftsmen, has now the ball at his feet, and new theatres in the parts of London suited to their growth rise like exhalations.

Such menace as the prophets of evil see in the present unprecedentedly prosperous state of affairs comes from within rather than from without, from the exacting vanity which the exercise of the most dangerous of callings is apt to breed, and from the intolerance of censure and discipline fostered by continuous success. If any external peril seems to

be dreaded it is that the public, in its emancipation from restraint and its enjoyment of privilege, should grow disposed to seek amusement at any cost, and to balance the attractions of a well-managed music-hall against those of some ill-managed theatres. Of this before-mentioned “generation” the second decade is, roughly speaking, that undertaken in the present survey. It is, so far as regards the stage, a period of new birth. The breach with the traditions of an unambitious and irreverent past began with the opening by Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft in 1865 of the Prince of Wales’s Theatre in Tottenham Street, and the production of the early comedies of T. W. Robertson. Fortune smiled from the first upon well-directed effort, and a venture involving some elements of extreme risk had a success beyond the dreams of those by whom it was made.

From the moment it succeeded, a return to, or a continuance of, what had before been seen became impossible. Ruin speedily drove from the London stage the manager who could not benefit by experience. Into the merits and defects of the Robertsonian comedy, accepted from the outset by the public, disputed step by step by critics of a certain order, called by damaging nicknames not yet wholly forgotten, there is no need to enter. Nothing prettier or more healthful has replaced it, and the most conspicuous of subsequent popular successes have not seldom emanated from men who have had the feeling or the courage to go back to the Robertsonian style.

Still better days were in store. The Franco-

German War, disastrous in its influence on France, led to the visit to England of the Comédie Française, a visit unremunerative at first but after a while successful and potent in influence. Familiar enough with foreign art was a section of playgoers. Memories of Rachel, of Bouffé, of Lafont, of Ravel, and of Ristori still linger. These and other great artists had, however, appeared as "stars" and had not seldom been supported by scratch companies of the most unsatisfactory description. When it first came to London the Comédie Française, which had naturally fallen on evil days, and was driven to a policy of retrenchment as well as to banishment, brought with it a limited number of its best actors. Men of highest position and of world-wide reputation were compelled accordingly to accept the smallest *rôles*, sometimes, indeed, those of mere supernumeraries. M. Got himself, shortly afterwards *doyen* of the company, took a part in which he had not half-a-dozen lines to speak. From the moment that the value of *ensemble* such as was then exhibited was recognised the disgraceful exhibitions previously tolerated could no longer exist. In a representation of an aristocratic hall guests who could scarcely be taken for the friends of the domestics could not be tolerated, and the mimic spectators of a thrilling action could not be permitted to yawn into the gallery or to launch *œillades* at the stalls. Again and again the Comédie Française visited London. It was succeeded by the companies of the Gymnase-Dramatique, the Vaudeville, the Palais Royal, and half-a-dozen more Parisian theatres, by the Saxe-

Meiningen Company and the Rotterdam Dramatic Company, though "last not least" in this splendid list.

By this time the question of *ensemble* was settled and even the sleepiest of "personally directed" companies was compelled to make some pretence to adequacy of mounting and cast. So far as regards *mise en scène*, meanwhile, the lesson had been learned almost too well, and the only thing to be feared was that decorations too artistic and luxurious should detract from the *vraisemblance* of the scene as when in the house of a country gentleman is presented a collection of treasures only to be expected in a palace. That this difficulty has not had to be faced seems due in part to the fact that the stage and those enjoying it reflect on each other, and that the fashionable world has made haste to overtake and realise the pictures set before it.

One result that was hoped from the lessons obtained has not been realised. The star system has not been killed, it has not even been scotched. Some consolation; nevertheless, is to be obtained. It no longer pays in London and it has to bury its head in the country. There, even, some modification has been undergone. It is not the star who is ordinarily acceptable in a country town, it is a piece with the *cachet* of a London success.

The question whether we have better actors than we had a generation ago is not easily answered. The very oldest existing document consists of the recorded conviction of a sage that youth in his time had fallen off from its former high estate. This

complaint was uttered earlier than the time of Abraham. Since then, if the croakers are to be trusted, one system of continuous decadence and deterioration has prevailed. By this reckoning, men should by this time be "less than smallest dwarfs," and their manners should be lower than those of the brutes. We have, on the contrary, until within comparatively recent days when the obligation of medical science to save the most rickety life was recognised, improved physically, mentally, and morally. Yet the old belief in the decay of morals and manners prevails. It is the same thing with actors. Betterton was supposed to have had his business transmitted from Burbage ; Colley Cibber and the old stagers would not hear of Garrick after Betterton. The Kembles had to establish themselves in the teeth of the ascendancy of Garrick, Kean had to fight the Kemble traditions, and other actors to Macready and Irving had to triumph over the menacing spectres of their predecessors. A generation ago Benjamin Webster was in his full glory as a melodramatic actor, Keeley and Wright had quitted the stage, and Buckstone was the recognised humorist. Phelps and Charles Kean were the principal tragedians, and Miss Helen Faucit (Lady Martin) still gave occasional revelations of her marvellous powers. Of Webster it may at once be said that his position is in the foremost rank of English actors and that no superior in his line has been seen or is to be hoped. No Juliet or Rosalind finer than that of Miss Faucit has been known, and Buckstone, though his was

scarcely acting, had the drollest and most cherubic personality in the world ; Mr. David James is not now more unctuous, or Mr. Toole more droll. Wright, meanwhile, according to Macready, was in his best days the greatest comedian he, Macready, had ever seen. Single actors as good as any of these may be mentioned, but superiors to them are not to be found. None the less the acting of to-day is as a whole a wonderful advance upon that previously seen. Charles Kean's conception of an ideal company was, it used to be said, himself, "Ellen," and a *corps de ballet*. Webster's surroundings were not seldom contemptible, and the phrase "Adelphi guests" remained with a slightly changing significance a byword. At first applied to supernumeraries presenting ladies and gentlemen, it was in time transferred to the "dead heads" in the stalls, recognisable by scarlet opera cloaks or borrowed and ill-fitting dress-coats, with whom acting-managers, more careful concerning their own benefits than the prosperity of their employers, flooded the theatres. Such a thing as *ensemble* was undreamed of and unknown. Performances such as at the Lyceum, the Haymarket, the Garrick, the Criterion, the St. James's, the Court, are the delight of artistic London belong wholly to modern days. Strangely different, moreover, is the constitution of the programme. A single piece beginning at eight o'clock and ending at eleven constitutes now the entire evening's entertainment. An opening and a closing farce were then indispensable. The playgoer would dine early for the sake of

seeing Buckstone and Compton in "Box and Cox," or at a little later period, Toole in the "Area Belle". If there were no farces, two dramas or comedies not seldom constituted the bill. Farce now practically lives, thanks to the genius and energy of one man. Mr. Toole has given the "Spitalfields' Weaver" or "Ici on parle Français" more times than we are able to count, and is still as acceptable in farce as ever he has been. Farcical comedy, a no less diverting production, has supplanted farce. The establishment of this seems to date from the success of the "Chapeau de Paille d'Italie," known in England by many adaptations, and notably by Mr. Gilbert's "Wedding March". Vaudevilles on somewhat similar lines had been previously exhibited, but it was this success that applied the spur to the French dramatists who have given us scores of delightful and saucy whimsicalities, "Les Dominos Roses," "Gavaut-Minard et Cie.," and what not. Complaint has been heard of the licence in which authors indulge in pieces of this class. As a rule, on the English stage at least, farcical comedy is skittish rather than indecent, and frequenters of the modern theatre have little of which to complain. The light operas which are naturally associated with farcical comedy, and to which in part the "Chapeau de Paille d'Italie" may be said to have belonged, do not as a rule come into my purview.

The French drama now as previously exercises a strong influence over the stage. At the moment when these lines are being written, the Comédie

Française has concluded an engagement at Drury Lane in the course of which it has played, in addition to a few classic pieces, half its modern *répertoire*. A bewitching Italian artist, Signora Duse, has moreover stolen all hearts. Hers is indeed the "sweet neglect" for which Ben Jonson sighed, the

Face
That makes simplicity a grace.

In exquisite fashion has she shown us how to play Camille (Marguerite Gautier) and Cyprienne Desprunelles, and how not to play Cleopatra. Not a few of the plays which London has during the last season flocked to see have nevertheless been of home production. At the Garrick, M. Sardou has been represented by "Diplomacy," a version of his "Dora," and at the Avenue M. Ohnet by his "Ironmaster". Elsewhere, however, the outlook is inspiring. At the Lyceum has been "Becket," a noble drama, by one of the greatest of Victorian or otherwise of English poets. "Hypatia" at the Haymarket is the ambitious production of an English writer, as is "A Woman of no Importance" by which it has been succeeded. "Liberty Hall" and "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" at the St. James's, "The Bauble Shop" at the Criterion, the "Amazons" at the Court, are all English, as are such lighter pieces as "Walker, London," "Niobe," and "Charley's Aunt". A few Ibsen experiments have to be taken into account in attempting an estimate of the influences to which at the present moment the stage is subject. "The Master

Builder" has been seen and received with a storm of execration or derision ; "The Doll's House," after a fierce polemic, seems to have established itself as an acting play ; "An Enemy of the People" has won its way to the historic stage of the Hay-market.

The influence of Ibsen upon the English stage is not as yet far-reaching. It is now the less distinctly perceptible. Mr. Pinero's "Second Mrs. Tanqueray" is a study in the Ibsen manner, and more than one of Mr. H. A. Jones' finest dramas has owed something to the teaching of the Norwegian poet. In the outcry raised by the production of Ibsen's quaint, absorbing, perverse, and I fear I must add provincial pieces, the strongest and most spontaneous if most unconscious tribute to his merit is paid. The effect of a bad play is weariness. The lover knows well that the hatred of his mistress may be converted into love. It is otherwise with her indifference. A man who inspires such admiration and such passion as Ibsen, and who is the subject of nightly discussion and recrimination in literary circles, is not a nobody. My own admiration for much of Ibsen's work is calm, but there are plays of his which profoundly impress me. I have seen "A Doll's House" three times, and "Hedda Gabler" twice as often, and should be glad to see both again. Little remains to be added. Most important dramatic work of recent days is dealt with in the pages that follow, or are in reserve, and there is no temptation to anticipate the opinions expressed. That the stage is in a more flourishing condition

now than any time in the last half of the century few will deny who recognise that London possesses half-a-dozen theatres able to challenge comparisons with the subventioned houses of the continent.

CHAPTER I.

Lyceum : “*Hamlet*”.—*Prince of Wales* : “*Sweethearts*,” a dramatic contrast in two acts, by W. S. Gilbert.—*Gaiety* : “*Merry Wives of Windsor*”.

MR. IRVING’S career bears some resemblance to that of Nov. 7, 1874. Mr. Fechter, the most distinguished of his immediate predecessors in the rôle he now assumes. Putting on one side those preliminary years which the Frenchman occupied in the study of sculpture and in dramatic performances in Italy and Germany, and the Englishman in the pursuit of his profession in the country, and dating the commencement of the artist life of each from his appearance on a theatre in Paris or London, we find that the two actors commenced in comedy, passed through varying forms of melodrama to the romantic and the poetic drama, and attained the climax in Shakspeare. There is this difference, however, that while Mr. Fechter rose slowly, through successive stages, looking carefully to his foothold, Mr. Irving has gone lightly and easily over the ground, and has reached the summit with but little exertion.

Since Mr. Irving, in Digby Grant, first won from the public a recognition of his talents in comedy, he has appeared in about half-a-dozen characters, of which two, Mathias in “*The Bells*,” and Eugene Aram, belong to full-blooded melodrama; three, Philip, Richelieu, and Claude Melnotte, to the romantic; and one, Charles the First, to the poetic drama. These distinctions may be arbitrary. There is no beating the bounds of the dramatic parishes, and it is not at times easy to know to which

category to assign a piece. It is, however, clear that most forms of drama which the public taste accepts have been tried by Mr. Irving with more or less success, and that in the end the stage prize has fallen into his hands, and he has played Hamlet before a London audience.

It would be unfair to assume that the reason why Hamlet is a favourite rôle with actors is because it is the longest in the acted drama. In spite of a recommendation so powerful, a more difficult and thankless part, so far as the actor is concerned, does not exist. Of all Shakspeare's great plays it belongs most distinctly to the closet. Richard, Macbeth, Shylock, Othello, Julius Cæsar, Antony, Lear even, are men of action, whose deeds can be counterfeited with some hope of success. Hamlet is the scholar, and as all like to see the exaltation of their own class, he is the scholar's special favourite. So meditative and reflective is he, that Germans have taken him for the type of their nationality, and German criticism has left no aspect of his character unexamined. We might go farther, and say it has investigated a good many phases which have no existence except in Teutonic imagination. So long, however, as every scholar throughout civilisation retains an individual conception of Hamlet, the actor who undertakes to present it will always encounter exceptional risks.

It does not follow because the risk is great it is not to be challenged. The words of the Marquis of Montrose are true in more respects than one; and in acting, as in love,

He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
That dares not put it to the touch
To gain or lose it all.

Mr. Irving has put his fate "to the touch," and has come off, if not victorious, at least unshamed.

To pronounce an absolute and a comprehensive opinion

upon the entire performance is a task of extreme difficulty ; to dwell upon the merits and defects of single scenes or passages is one that might prove endless. Our endeavour is confined accordingly to mentioning a few prominent points in the impersonation and drawing attention to its broader features. Of the whole, we are justified in saying that it is interesting and intellectual in an eminent degree. From the efforts of would-be tragedians it is separated by an abyss. The character has been studied with care and intelligence, and the conception throughout is elevated and sustained. If we judge it by its effects upon the audience, its triumph is assured. As no event has created more profound interest, no audience at any previous representation of modern days has been more capable and more critical. Slowly and reluctantly it came under the spell of the conception, and at the close of the third act it was riveted in a way such as we read of in records of past performances, but scarcely, so far as English acting is concerned, can recall. To come thus under the spell of a powerful representation, it is not necessary, be it remembered, to agree with the interpretation so far as its intellectual basis is concerned. Those even who dissent most widely from the idea of the character embodied by Mr. Irving will not deny having yielded, for a time at least, to the empire at one or two points exercised. To give our own estimate of Hamlet is but to add one more to the many attempts to fix the impalpable which art and criticism have essayed. Define and theorise as you will, there is an expression in the face you cannot get upon canvas—an influence in the elixir you cannot separate or detect. Mr. Irving has read, apparently, most that German criticism has said, and has sought to embody what is best in its opinions. He presents a prince melancholy in his mood, but capable of short fits of cheerfulness and even of light-heartedness ; courteous in manner, though familiar ; benign in disposition ; averse from

action ; and anxious, as it seems, to divest himself of the terrible responsibilities thrust upon him. His "antic" fashions are all assumed, and his pulse beats "healthful music". So strongly is this conveyed, that the words he addresses to Horatio seem extorted from his own inner consciousness :—

Blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled,
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please.

Without waiting to debate the question some writers have tried of late to elevate into importance, whether any real madness should be revealed underneath the "antic" disposition of Hamlet, it may be said that most inspiration and most fatal manifestations are accompanied by some disturbance of mental balance. The "heat" of the "pale-mouthed prophet dreaming" is, in itself, a species of madness, and the actions of men under the direct sway of supernatural influences can never be conformable to ordinary standards. Mr. Irving fails to present that possession which the circumstances warrant. He does not even, as it seems, seek to depict it. His melancholy is that of a man who is sorry for himself and who loathes the incest and murder he is compelled to scourge. It is not that, however, of one on whom the gods have stamped their signet. No burden of destiny weighs upon him ; no shuddering sense that between him and human sympathy and human enjoyment stands a pale, menacing, and rebukewful phantom. The varied tempers and moods, indeed, are intellectual, and the mystic and encompassing dread that can never quit a man with so terrible a mission are unseen. His action is abrupt, nervous, and almost fidgety, and there is an absence of the repose which is so powerful an influence in art. His step, short and frequently jerky, shows want of the self-reliance which should spring from perfect mastery.

While pointing to these deficiencies of conception and of execution, we are putting on one side many remarkable beauties. The manner in which the Ghost's counsel is heard is finely indicative of reverence and affection struggling with terror; the advice to the Players is given with admirable art; the rebuke of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is full of fire; and the scene in the Queen's chamber is presented with remarkable pathos. The best scene of all in the interpretation is that in which *Hamlet* utters his rhapsody after his stratagem to "catch the conscience of the King" has proved successful, and ends by throwing himself into the seat previously occupied by the discomfited monarch.

These are but a few of many noteworthy features in Mr. Irving's performance. In a case like the present it is but fair to credit the principal actor with the invention of many of the effects which prove most telling. The admirable fencing scene, accordingly, between *Hamlet* and Laertes (Mr. Leathes) must be attributed to Mr. Irving. Both combatants looked admirably picturesque, and by both the fight was finely managed. Not less good was the manner in which the death of the King was compassed. Specially fine, moreover, was the awe-stricken face of Miss Pauncefort, as *Gertrude*, when she heard her son's arraignment. A countenance more charged with tears has seldom been seen. Mr. Conway's bright and refined picture of *Osric*, and Mr. George Neville's graceful appearance and intelligent acting as *Horatio*, deserve mention. Mr. Compton's *Gravedigger* is the best the stage supplies; and Mr. Chippendale's *Polonius* affords as good a presentation as can be expected of a character the most perplexing and irreconcilable in Shakspeare. We are often disposed to ask if the gags of the first actor have not got incorporated into the text of this part in a larger proportion than usual. Miss Isabel Bateman as *Ophelia*, Mr. T. Mead as the *Ghost*, and Mr. Swinbourne as the *King*,

make up the remainder of the cast so far as the principal characters are concerned.

Before quitting a performance which, noteworthy as proving that artistic effect and purpose in tragedy still survive, is yet more noteworthy as marking a stage in the history of theatrical art, since it shows the final abandonment of old traditions of acting and of conventions of declamation, we may speculate as to whether, in presence of the changes now in operation, our theories of art will have to be reconsidered. After all, a drama is a mimic presentation, and not a real one. So long as we do not kill our actors, like Roman gladiators, we must have a portion, at least, of the presentation conventional. If the style Mr. Irving adopts of giving Shakspeare's soliloquies is that of the future, we in England are as far ahead of French art as we were in the days when Talma learned in England the lessons he transmitted to France, and on which the French school is founded. Where, moreover, may be asked, is the conventional to begin? Leaving these questions for the present unanswered, we may own, in one respect, a special obligation to Mr. Irving. In a performance that is revolutionary, and that would have appeared more so but for the previous experiment of Mr. Fechter, he makes no changes for the sake of change. Occasionally, as when he breaks the pipe that he has used for purpose of illustration, his new business is unimportant. It is generally, however, significant, even when we think it is wrong.

Nov. 14, 1874. FEW signs augur more hopefully for the future of our stage, or indicate more distinctly the revival of a sound judgment in theatrical matters, than the manner in which the canons of recent management are disregarded. A few years ago, no manager would have dreamed of putting upon the stage a piece which could only be designated a



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Mr. Henry Irving.

“dramatic contrast,” or indeed, of reading at all a play in two acts. Now the fear seems to be that innovation and experiment will run riot, and that all past teaching and experience will be disregarded. Mr. Gilbert’s “Sweethearts,” which at present occupies the place of honour at the Prince of Wales’ Theatre, is one of those light productions of sentimental interest which, since the days when the *proverbes* of Alfred de Musset were first acted in Russia, have sprung into high favour in Paris, and are a constant dish at the Comédie Française. Viands less capable of staying appetite can scarcely be found. Not seldom, however, they compensate in delicacy for what they want in substance. From the point of art, we are inclined to rank Mr. Gilbert’s latest piece, without situation or plot as it is, as his highest accomplishment. Few modern works have taken a stronger hold upon an audience, or have elicited approval more open and more spontaneous. The term “contrast” describes satisfactorily the play. Two short interviews between a pair of lovers reveal the entire shaping of their destiny. In the first, the youth who has received an appointment in India strives vainly before his departure to wring from his mistress such confession of affection as shall satisfy his longings, and fails to perceive how, as Sir Philip Sidney says,—

such-wise she love denied
As yet love she signified.

In the second a man middle-aged now and staid in purpose, not wanting in honours and distinctions, and oblivious of the boyish love from which he is separated by thirty years of active life, returns to find the woman still steadfast in the affection she dared not avow. Many gracefully-conceived and well-arranged devices give point to the lesson that “men were deceivers ever,” and heighten the contrast between the two characters. The flower, his mistress’s

gift, which, with vows, "false as dicer's oaths," the youth has pressed to his bosom, has been discarded and lost; that she received, with ill-worn assumption of indifference, is still preserved and cherished; the tree her lover has aided her to plant is watched by her with tender care, and it is he who suggests, upon his return, that it is an eyesore and a hindrance. Mr. Gilbert has, indeed, handled his theme with singular delicacy and tenderness; and his piece, which is none the worse for a slight flavour of cynicism, is fresh, graceful, and original. It is admirably acted. Miss Wilton's presentation of love, thinly veiled behind coyness and coquetry, is unsurpassed upon the modern stage; and the touches of pathos she introduces, each a revelation to the audience, are thoroughly artistic and beautiful. Her passion of tears when she finds the parting is indeed for ever is profoundly touching, and her reception of the wounds her returned lover with unconscious cruelty inflicts, shows with how slight apparent expenditure of power the highest results can be obtained. Mr. Coghlan's presentation of the staid and influential Anglo-Indian is also excellent. Especially good is the manner in which he is awed into something like fear by the knowledge of how tried a constancy has waited upon him.

Good as are both pieces and acting, neither is free from defects. It is a mistake in art to introduce unnecessarily the offensive costume of thirty years ago. A piece so slight does not demand archæological correctness, and some idealisation of the dress is imperative. Thirty years, again, convert the boy and girl into the middle-aged man and woman, and not into old folk. Both actors had, so far as appearance is concerned, added forty years to their age, and the result was a defeat for the author's obvious intention. Mr. Gilbert again adds to masculine atrocity. He should not make a man forget the name of the woman to whom he has proposed, nor

insult her by telling her that a week later he was equally in love with some one else. The first is false to nature, seeing a man does not forget the girl with whom he has grown from childhood on terms of intimacy and affection ; and the second is false to the rules of politeness, which a man so eminently respectable as his hero is sure to observe. When he says the governess "was" a wife with five children there is such a shock to the audience, we cannot but hope the word was given wrongly, and should have been "is". With these trifling drawbacks, the play and the interpretation are alike to be commended.

IF ever the comedies of Shakspeare are to regain their Dec. 26 1874. prestige as acting plays, and to prove a source of lasting attraction to the public, it is under such conditions as are now realised at the Gaiety. The first requisite to their success speaks of a complete change in the taste of the play-goer. It consists of a small, or, at any rate, a moderately-sized theatre. Time has been when Shakspearian comedy found its only home in London, in Covent Garden, and Drury Lane. Whether our art has now lost its breadth, or the public has learned to like a different style of entertainment, it is, at least, certain that the stage of our large theatres, dangerous and trying enough to the tragedian, proves fatal in the case of comedy. Nothing can be much more depressing than the sound of small jokes heard across a cavernous stage ; and for one or two figures to fill the space, it is necessary that they should have tragic amplitude and dignity. Attention to dresses and decorations is important so far as the public is concerned, and the addition of music is often an advantage. Most important of all, however, is the selection of a cast. The failure of Shakspeare at Drury Lane is principally assignable to the fact that, while competent actors were secured for the leading characters,

subordinate parts were allotted to people fitted for little more than to carry a flag in a procession. Mr. Hollingshead has scrutinised carefully the various companies in London, and has secured for his performances actors who are, if not qualified in all cases, the best obtainable.

To do this in the case of the "Merry Wives of Windsor" is no easy task. Though the most farcical, probably, of Shakspeare's productions, destitute alike of moral elevation and of poetical power, it contains a remarkable number of distinct and well-developed characters. Not a few of them have done duty in previous plays, and one or two of these are but colourless reflections of their former selves. Sir Hugh Evans, Dr. Caius, Slender, Ford, and the two wives, are, however, distinct and new creations. A striking illustration of Shakspeare's workmanship is afforded in the manner in which one of the characters of this play, sweet Anne Page, is installed for ever as an object of the world's worship. Thrice only does she appear on the stage, she has few words to say, and the only moral trait we discover in her is a tendency, not uncommon in her sex, to prefer her own way before that of her father and mother. What else we learn of her, on the authority of Slender, amounts to this, that "she has brown hair, and speaks small like a woman". She yet remains as distinct and gracious a reality as any of the characters of history or fiction, and the first idea apt to invade the mind when we think of Windsor is that of "sweet Anne Page".

Ford's suspicions are natural, and the means he takes to obtain a knowledge of his own misery convey, in the degradation they imply, a lesson upon the evils of jealousy. His gossip, Page, is a more commonplace conception, but is still a type of the *bourgeois* character, hospitable and frank in social affairs, but keeping an eye on the main chance. Sir Hugh Evans and Dr. Caius are whimsical. One is at a loss to understand why Shakspeare should

have named the Frenchman after the famous founder of Caius College, alive at the time when the play was written. His fierce and turbulent resentment contrasts finely with the Welshman's equally impetuous but more varying disposition, "full of cholers and trembling of mind," with his fervour and non-professional leaning to music and poetry, and his "great dispositions to cry". Simple even is not without a character of his own; and the host, in his notions of life, would have made a boon companion to Friar John of the Funnels. Slender, again, is of the very pedigree of the Shallows, and Shallow himself, though a little crestfallen, is still mindful of his dignities, and hardly unmindful of his valour.

Sir John Falstaff is, in fact, the one defect among the characters of the play. He is not a shadow of his former self. If the story is true that Queen Elizabeth, interested in the adventures of the fat knight, ordered Shakspeare to show him in love, the poet evaded cleverly the command imposed upon him without escaping the penalty involved in enforced work. There is not a shadow of pretence for asserting Sir John to be in love with anything except the money-bags of his neighbour, to which he has never been inattentive. In the poor victim of tricks and plots, we recognise nothing of the man who could twist Dame Quickly round his finger; and when Pistol and Nym refuse to carry his messages, we wonder where is that power over those around him which elicited, upon news being received of his death, Bardolph's touching, if profane exclamation—"Would I were with him wheresoe'er he is, whether in Heaven or Hell". Nym is curiously coxcombical with his "humours," but Pistol, too, has fallen from his former glory. We cannot, indeed, avoid a fancy that the task of humiliating Falstaff was reluctantly commenced, and half-heartedly continued. As regards the dialogue, much of it is probably due to the actors. This view is supported by the fact that in the first quarto edition

the play has not half the dimensions it assumes in the folio.

Mr. Phelps's *Falstaff* is wholly without unction or geniality. It is affecting, however, and is a Falstaff, though scarcely the Falstaff we imagine. In consequence of the dryness of manner of the actor, Falstaff's references to the results of his own obesity acquire an added coarseness. Mr. Cecil's *Dr. Caius* is a well-studied and fine performance. Mr. Righton's *Sir Hugh* is also careful and effective. Mr. Vezin's *Ford* is powerful, and not destitute of mirthfulness. The *Mr. Page* of Mr. Belford, the *Slender* of Mr. Taylor, the *Pistol* of Mr. Soutar, the *Simple* of Mr. Leigh, and the *Fenton* of Mr. Forbes Robertson, deserve mention. Mrs. Wood and Miss Rose Leclercq present agreeably the two wives. Mrs. Leigh is *Mrs. Quickly*, and Miss Furtado *Anne Page*. Miss Furtado looks the character, but sang much out of tune an original song by Mr. Swinburne, to which Mr. Sullivan had contributed the music. The scenery and decorations, we have said, are good. Little is gained, however, in this play by archæological correctness in the matter of costume, seeing that, though the action is laid in the time of Henry the Fourth, the dialogue and the characters belong to that of Elizabeth. The reception of the performance was favourable. It is difficult to believe that the piece has strength for a long run. It is regrettable, however, that such is required. If Mr. Hollingshead employed the company he has now collected in the presentation of different plays of Shakspeare and other early dramatists, he would do a service to the stage, and might, we fancy, prove that such experiments can be made permanently remunerative. The long run of pieces seems fatal to all serious effort in management in this direction, and to all continued advance in art.

CHAPTER II.

Vaudeville : “*Our Boys*,” comedy in three acts, by H. J. Byron.—*Gaiety* : “*As You Like It*”.—*Drury Lane* : “*Othello*”.

IN “Our Boys” Mr. Byron has risen nearer excellence Jan. 23, 1875. than in any previous piece. Evidence of careful workmanship, of workmanship, that is, that in his case may be considered careful, are abundant; his worst faults are kept in check; and one or two of the blemishes that disfigured his style have almost, if not entirely, disappeared. An attempt is visible to give the dialogue the appropriateness without which wit is dramatically ineffective, and the rudeness of speech which, doing duty for repartee, communicated to previous compositions an indescribable artificiality, less frequently shocks the audience. Add to this that the motive is more tender than in any previous work, and sufficient proof of amendment is afforded. Distinct, however, as is the progress that is made, there is room for further advance. A gentleman should not be presented as scolding angrily a lady he scarcely knows; young women should not, whatever their disappointment, tell their hosts they are old and ugly; and people in general in plays should conform to those habits of behaviour and speech which society has found indispensable to its own existence. A weakness Mr. Byron must learn to conquer is his affection for his own jokes. Professed wags are believed, at times, to sacrifice their friends to their jokes. Mr. Byron

goes further, and sacrifices his situation to his propensity to verbal quibble. A notable instance of this is afforded in the second act of this play, where pathos and strength are forfeited in consequence of the introduction of a farcical and preposterous pun.

Some satirical purpose is apparent in the plot, which derides the efforts by system to change human nature. For a while youth yields to the restraints under which it is placed. When once love sets the pulses stirring, you may as well seek to keep in a silken leash the tiger cub which has tasted blood as hope to make boyhood submissive to parental control. "Our Boys" are the sons respectively of a baronet and an enriched tradesman. While one has been brought up to habits of military obedience, the other has known no curb, parental fondness having anticipated his every wish. When love, wrongly placed in each instance according to parental judgment, asserts itself, neither system brings the fruits expected. The same denial is accorded to the request, backed up by a lifetime of indulgence, that awaits the command which comes with the weight of accumulated years of authority. The revolt is complete. Shaking the dust from their feet, the youths start for London to earn their own livelihood. In this attempt they naturally fail, and parental forgiveness and concession reach them only just in time to prevent the issue of the experiment from proving disaster.

The conduct of the boys is manly, and that of the fathers is not unnatural. A lesson deeper than those Mr. Byron ordinarily teaches is enforced in the redeeming influences of the suffering to which his heroes are subject. From the alembic of sorrow and hard work an empty-headed "swell" issues a feeling, capable and sympathetic being, while a "bumptious" young gentleman who goes into ecstasies on every occasion grows, under the same influence, a little manlier and more tolerable. It may, of course, be urged that a man so vacuous as Talbot Champ-

neys appears in the first act, in which, unlike another hero of Mr. Byron's, he *is* as great a fool as he looks, could scarcely have proved himself the man he subsequently becomes. It is as well, however, candidly to own that Mr. Byron's dramas will not stand this style of criticism. Those who seek to enjoy these amusing productions must be content to yield themselves into the author's hands. Accepting unquestioningly his conclusions, and laughing at the incongruities and whimsicalities of his dialogue, they will find the task of listening to his plays agreeable and entertaining. If they are squeamish upon points of art or probability, their case is hopeless. It must be confessed, moreover, the task Mr. Byron imposes upon himself is at times sufficiently arduous to render pardonable the employment of shifts. Let us take, for instance, the point he reaches towards the conclusion of this play. After two fairly spirited acts, a third is wanted, and materials are not forthcoming. Two young men who have quarrelled with their fathers, and sought vainly to earn a living, are in a garret; two fathers are burning to forgive them, and two sweethearts are dying to clasp them in their arms. The dramatist's task, then, is to bring all the *dramatis personæ* into the attic in which the action is placed, and to defer the termination long enough to make the intrigue sufficiently strong to justify its extension over an act. The first difficulty is got over by the process of cutting a knot, instead of untying it. The characters arrive by the simple process of coming. Except that the week is that of the cattle-show, there is no reason for them all reappearing on one special day. Once in the room, the two fathers, who are first to arrive, hide in closets, while the aunt of one youth, who comes second, goes down into the kitchen to cook a fowl, leaving her bonnet behind her. This bonnet supplies the act with its interest. When the girls reach the room, they see in this article of attire proof of feminine occupancy, and hear in

closets noises which betray the presence of some concealed visitor. They depart accordingly in a huff. The fathers meanwhile, who from their hiding-places have heard the sound of female voices raised in rebukeful tones, judge that their sons have formed dishonouring *liaisons*. While this remarkable expansion of plot is afforded, the audience, chafing over needless and vexatious procrastination of a result seen to be inevitable, feels its enthusiasm, like the valour of Bob Acres, oozing out at its fingers' ends, and has to summon back memories of past amusement to enable it to accord a favourable verdict.

The interpretation was competent. Mr. James showed, as a retired tradesman, a mixture of vulgarity, *bonhomie*, and good feeling, which was quite effective; Mr. Farren gave a good study of aristocratic pride; Mr. Warner was satisfactory as an impetuous student; and Mr. Thorne presented a very amusing picture of the golden youth of the period. Miss Kate Bishop and Miss Roselle enacted gracefully the two heroines; and Miss Cicely Richards obtained a conspicuous triumph in a small part, that of *Belinda*, a lodging-house servant. The colour of the decorations in the first scene was unpleasant. As, however, it presented the house of a retired cheesemonger, the vulgarity was probably intentional.

Feb. 27, 1875. ROSALIND, in "As You Like It," is less suited to Mrs. Kendal than Miss Hardcastle, the part she was acting a week or two ago, and *Orlando* is wholly outside Mr. Kendal's range. In light comedy Mr. Kendal has made, during late years, a decided advance. Few modern actors can present better than he the joyous and *débonnaire* youth of an artificial state of society. He has, however, nothing about him of the Céladon. So soon as sentiment has to be displayed, or the "clouded cane" exchanged for a

crook, the self-consciousness which seems ingrained in the modern English actor develops itself, and he becomes formal and ill at ease. One side of the character of Rosalind is shown by Mrs. Kendal with admirable clearness and point. So suited to her style are the bantering speeches Shakspeare has put into the mouth of Rosalind, they might almost have been written for her. A certain undercurrent of irony is apparent in all Mrs. Kendal's acting. At times its effect is excellent. The most telling pathos has a flavour of the kind. So strong is this in the writings of Thackeray, it has caused one of the most tender and sympathetic of English writers to be regarded as a satirist. With Mrs. Kendal, however, the irony can scarcely, perhaps, be said to add to the pathos. The woman seems always a little inclined to deride her own weaknesses, and to pity and laugh at herself for her yieldings. Such speeches as those addressed to Orlando by the supposed *Ganymede* were delivered with marvellous effect, and the short epilogue was delightful. What was wanting was the underlying tenderness that more emotional artists are able to present. One actress only in modern times has shown the character as Shakspeare drew it. This is Miss Faucit. To the last the rapture of tenderness she displayed in asking, "In good sooth, are you he that hangs the verses on the trees, wherein Rosalind is so much admired?" was maintained; and the manner in which the verses themselves were hugged to her heart, then furtively pressed to her lips, was one of those touches the memory of which never forsakes us. This is the true Rosalind, who at first sight rewards Orlando with a gold chain, and tells him with outspoken candour, on their meeting—

Sir, you have wrestled well, and overthrown
More than your enemies.

Mr. Vezin's *Jaques* was admirable. It is difficult to

imagine a presentation of this character according to received theories more ample and more satisfactory. We are not quite sure, however, whether Shakspeare did not intend Jaques to be in part a comic character, a foil to Touchstone. Much of his moralising is beautiful, no doubt, but much also is of the sententious kind he puts into the mouth of men such as Polonius. Had this character been wholly sentimental and noble, Orlando would scarcely have been allowed to get so much the better of him in their wit-combats. Mr. Arthur Cecil, as *Touchstone*, suffered from visible nervousness. His conception of the character displayed much that is novel. *Touchstone* is familiar with courts, and may, perhaps, be supposed to bear himself with a fair amount of quietude and dignity. On the whole, however, the impersonation would have been better for a little more breadth and colour. Mr. Maclean, as *Adam*, was less absurdly senile and lachrymose than some of his recent predecessors, and was accordingly more satisfactory. Mrs. Leigh slightly caricatured the part of *Audrey*. Miss Nellie Harris was *Celia*. The remaining parts were indifferently sustained, the delivery of the lines in this, as in most cases of Shakespearian performances, being of a kind to add point to the exclamation of Jaques :—

Nay, then, God be wi' you, an' you talk in blank verse.

April 10, 1875. No slight censure of modern English art is involved in the fact that the mention of the masterpieces of Shakespearian tragedy is apt to bring up recollections of foreign actors. *Hamlet* is at the present moment associated in public estimation with Mr. Irving. A year ago, however, the names it first recalled were those of Emil Devrient, Mr. Fechter, and M. Rouvière. Mdlle. Stella Colas has not during recent years been surpassed in *Juliet*, and since

Mrs. Siddons, Signora Ristori is unapproached as Lady Macbeth. Within the last few days another character has been wrested from us, and Othello henceforward will be associated in the memory of playgoers with Signor Salvini. Othello has not been a favourite character with English exponents, happier always in presenting the sombre rage of Northern blood than the fierce and burning passion of the South. Those who remember Edmund Kean are few, and can speak only from distant recollections. Macready's Othello was the weakest of his Shakspearian performances. So weak was it, that men who, with the present writer, contemplated in it the most intellectual of tragedians for the first time, doubted whether his reputation was merited, and were scarcely disposed to see him in a second part. Neither Young nor Charles Kean has left many recollections as Othello. Mr. Phelps has played the part often, but it is far from the best of his tragic impersonations. It is strange, indeed, that the only man in days comparatively recent who has acquired any high reputation in Othello is one whose fame as an actor has since suffered eclipse. Before large theatres or other influences known to be prejudicial to English art had done their work, Mr. G. V. Brooke was an actor of promise, and his Othello still stands highest in the recollections of English playgoers.

In coming before the public then as Othello, Signor Salvini has to fear little competition, either actual or retrospective. So unlike anything that the present generation has seen is, however, his impersonation of the Moor, that opportunity is scarcely offered for comparison. It is splendid alike in its qualities and its defects, in virtues which raise it to something like supremacy in tragic art, and in defects powerful enough to mar its beauty, and leave the prevalent impression on the mind one not far from disappointment. Much as English actors may learn from the distinguished stranger who now comes among us,

it will be an evil day for art when young actors begin to train themselves in the school of which he is the most illustrious exponent.

Few physical advantages are wanting to Signor Salvini. His frame is manly and robust, his stature tall, his face handsome and expressive, and his voice powerful. These gifts have, of course, been cultivated to the utmost: the bearing is perfect in simplicity and nobility, the features are singularly mobile, and the music of the voice is as remarkable as its power.

Signor Salvini's conception of Othello is that we expect from a thoughtful, perceptive, and cultivated man. Othello with him is a barbarian, whose instincts, savage and passionate, are concealed behind a veneer of civilisation so thick that he is himself scarcely conscious he can be other than he appears. Friendly, loving, and courteous, he can, as Iago says:—

As tenderly be led by the nose
As asses are.

When the poison of jealousy ferments in his blood, the strife between the animal nature and the civilising influences of custom is long and sharp. In the end the barbarian triumphs, the concluding scene, if not wholly savage, exhibiting mere glimpses of those restraints which in the third act, though sorely tested, remain dominant. The picture is exact of a noble animal turning piteously in the toils in which it has been enmeshed, and finding its efforts at escape serve only to render its position more desperate.

In dwelling upon some salient features in the interpretation, it is well to note the gradual conquest of the intellectual nature and its disappearance before the rising passion and fury.

To the counsel of the Duke, in the first act, Othello listens with dignified attention. As Brabantio enters,

uttering exclamations concerning his daughter's loss, mixed with charges against Othello, the face of the Moor exhibits a variety of emotions, of which pity is the most conspicuous. His address to the senators is delivered with calm and sustained dignity, and with less aid of gesture than is common. The first revelation of his true nature occurs upon the appearance of Desdemona, whom he covers with a glance of indescribable tenderness. As she claims from the Duke permission to go with her husband to the wars his gaze becomes burning. Forgetful of all restraints, he approaches and almost folds her in his arms ; but awaking in time to recollections of the august presence in which he stands, he turns from her with a gesture of apology. The start with which he receives Brabantio's caution—

Look to her, Moor ; have a quick eye to see ;
She has deceived her father, and may thee—

shows not only his quickness in receiving a hint which, taken in conjunction with other matters, works afterwards “like madness in the brain,” but his fiery and impetuous disposition.

His delivery of the speech in the second act, on rejoining Desdemona at Cyprus, is steeped in Southern voluptuousness, for which the words afford warrant, since words can scarcely depict more profound contentment or more burning love. The interruption of the brawl begotten of Cassio's drunkenness is noticeable only inasmuch as it exhibits Othello as the commander of men, and reveals the qualities which have raised a Moor to a position of trust in a republic so intolerant of strangers as that of Venice. A noteworthy touch of uxoriousness is found in the manner in which Othello, after limiting the punishment of Cassio to dismissal, grows more angered upon Desdemona's appearance :—

Look, if my gentle love be not raised up !
(To Cass.) I'll make thee an example.

Supreme beatitude is evinced in the look which accompanies the delivery in the next act of the well-known speech, "Excellent wench," etc. The duel with Iago commences, and uneasiness is gradually communicated to the mind of Othello by the "leprous distilment" which Iago drops in his ear. Sitting at the table, Othello, at the first word, suspends his work, his attention becomes gradually close, until at the words, "Thou dost mean something," he rises from his chair, throwing down impatiently the pen he has been using. Few gestures are subsequently employed until the meaning of Iago's accusation is made plain. The slowness of his mind to drink in suspicion, and the manner in which presentiment of evil is transfigured into horror and rage, are the most striking and original characteristics of the interpretation. Iago's repetition of the charge previously brought against Desdemona of deceiving her father pains him, but communicates no downright mistrust, and the words "Not a jot, not a jot" (*Punto, punto*) seem an attempt at self-encouragement. With uneasy steps he now paces about the room, drinking in the words of Iago, until slowly the foul accusation takes shape in his mind. Shortly and sharply, and with tones of authority, he bids his antient farewell. He would fain be alone and hide his struggles from all observation; the injunction, "Set on thy wife to observe," comes as an afterthought. A brief episode of the loss by Desdemona of the handkerchief and its transfer to Iago separates the two portions of the duel. When with mind almost distracted he re-enters, he gazes gloomily back through the door which he holds open. Then follows the most impressive scene of the play. The famous farewell to his former occupation is delivered with much pathos. It is virtually a farewell also to his better self. When the voice of Iago breaks the thread of his reflections, the animal nature springs to assert itself. Seizing fiercely Iago by the throat, he crushes the cowering miscreant to the ground, and in the whirlwind

of his passion lifts his foot to stamp the heel upon his head, it might even be to stamp out his brains. Recalled, however, to reason, he turns away, and with averted head he stretches out his hand, and penitently, yet with a species of loathing, raises the prostrate wretch from the ground. In this scene, the one profoundly electrical effect of the interpretation is reached. Quitting Iago, he sits at the very back of the stage, until as the tempter deals the poison in stronger doses, and speaks of Cassio's sleeping words, he comes again forward to kneel and swear a terrible revenge.

Little opportunity is offered in the fourth act. His ill-worn courtesy to Desdemona renders more marked the menace of his eye, in which burns a lurid light of resolution. The blow before the messengers from Venice is well given, and the speech, "She can turn, and turn," is spoken with suppressed passion and enforced politeness, strikingly contrasted. The speech, "Had it pleased Heaven," etc., is delivered at the back of the stage. It has pathos, though scarcely in an eminent degree. When the interview with Desdemona is over, Othello shakes savagely the money in his purse in the ear of Emilia, and departs throwing it at her feet with a fine expression of scorn and indignation.

Thus far, though there are points on which we have doubts, the merits of the impersonation so completely overpower its defects, we have not stayed to hint censure. In the concluding scenes of the last act the conquest of the civilised being by the barbarian is carried out at the sacrifice of Shakspeare's intentions and at that of Art. After delivering the speech, "It is the cause," slowly, the first lines being spoken close to the door by which he enters, Othello kisses his sleeping wife, then goes to the window, and stands with the lightning playing upon his face. Desdemona wakes, sees him, and approaches. His recoil, expressive partly of unwillingness to embrace one who has so foully wronged him, next of fear lest the sweet

seductive influence of her caress might yet unman him, is fine. After the short dialogue of supplication on the one side, and refusal on the other, he seizes her by the hair of the head, and, dragging her on to the bed, strangles her with a ferocity that seems to take a delight in its office. The murder committed, Othello walks agitatedly backwards and forwards, not answering the cry of Emilia. When she tells him of the death of Roderigo by the hand of Cassio he starts, then relapses into sullen fury of discontent. He remains motionless for a while, with eye glazing, as he learns how mightily he has been abused, then staggers forward with open mouth and with a countenance charged with tragic passion. The following words are delivered in a wild abandonment of grief, that in the end becomes inarticulate in utterance, and with an accompaniment of beating of his head with his hands which, according to English canons of art, is excessive. Suddenly the thought of the tempter comes to him. Crouching low like a wild beast, he prepares for a spring. A sword is in the girdle of one of the attendants. Upon this he seizes, and passes it with one thrust through the traitor's body. Staggering then to a seat, he commences, sitting and weeping, the final speech. Nearing the end, he rises, and at the supreme moment cuts his throat with a short scimitar, hacking and hewing with savage energy, and imitating the noise that escaping blood and air may together make when the windpipe is severed.

Nothing in art so terribly realistic as this death-scene has been attempted. It is directly opposed to Shakspeare, who makes Othello say—

I took by the throat the circumcised dog,
And smote him—thus.

A man does not take by the neck one whose throat he is going to cut, since he would cut his own fingers in so doing. He seizes one, on the contrary, into whose heart

he is about to plunge a dagger. The word "smote" in Shakspeare is, indeed, sufficiently clear to leave no room for doubt or misconception. The effect on the audience is repellent to the last degree. This kind of death-scene needs only such slight and easily provided additions as the rupture of a bladder of blood, which the actor might place within reach, the exhibition of a bleeding throat, and a stream of blood serpentine upon the floor, to reach the limits of attainable realism. Tendencies in the direction of this kind of so-called art were seen in Signora Ristori, and marred her marvellously artistic impersonations. In the present case their effect is singularly detrimental to the artistic value of the performance. A movement in the same direction is, moreover, noticeable in other arts. When we instance the famous picture of Regnault, "An Execution in a Moorish Palace," the reader will at once see the parallel we draw. It is a different matter even to give realistic effects in pictures and to introduce them into Shakspearian tragedy. Aristotle's definition of Tragedy has never been surpassed. Its aim is to give the pleasure which arises from pity and terror through imitation—*τὴν ἀπὸ ἐλέον καὶ φόβου διὰ μιμήσεως ἡδονὴν παρασκευάζειν*. Terror is, indeed, the aim of all tragic art. When for this is substituted horror, and even commonplace horror, the degradation of art has commenced. Here is the one blot upon an interpretation which otherwise would command our warmest admiration. We have left ourselves no space to dwell on the version presented, which differs, in some respects, from that ordinarily adopted, upon the general cast, or upon any other features of interest. It may be mentioned that the get-up of Signor Salvini is always admirable, the most striking appearance being that assumed in the second act, when he is dressed in chain armour, with a steel helmet and hauberk.

CHAPTER III.

Prince of Wales's : “*The Merchant of Venice*”.—*St. James's* : “*Tom Cobb*,” comedy in three acts, by *W. S. Gilbert*.—*Drury Lane* : “*Il Gladiatore*,” drama in five acts, translated into Italian from the French of *Alexandre Soumet*.—*Strand* : “*Weak Woman*,” a comedy in three acts, by *H. J. Byron*.—*Charing Cross* : “*Jeanne Du-barry*,” a drama in three acts, by *H. Herman*.—*Olympic* : “*The Spendthrift*,” a comedy in five acts, by *James Albery*.—*Drury Lane* : “*Amleto*” .—*Court* : “*A Nine Days' Wonder*,” a comedy in three acts, by *Hamilton Aidé*.—*Princess's* : “*Katharine and Petruchio*,” altered from *Shakspeare*, by *David Garrick*.

April 24, 1875. IN passing from the domain of realistic comedy to that of the comedy of manners, the management of the Prince of Wales's Theaire attempted a march of no ordinary difficulty and danger. Recognising the efforts that had been made to give completeness in respect to external details, sensible of the merits of portions of the performance, and pleased with a series of bright and life-like pictures, the public accepted a representation of the “*School for Scandal*” which effected a rupture with tradition, and a complete severance of modern art from that of past days. Now, however, when a further step is taken, and the “*Merchant of Venice*” is produced in the same style as the “*School for Scandal*,” a like display of clemency or favour is not to be expected. What respect for dramatic art still exists in England clings to *Shakspeare*; and an attempt to convert his plays into spectacular

entertainments, however it may suit the ignorant pleasure-seekers who, flocking to Drury Lane, have turned what should be a national theatre into something not widely different from a circus, is not likely to find acceptance from a more enlightened public. In spite, accordingly, of a lavish, and in its way judicious, expenditure, the result of the experiment appears in this case to be failure. Superb views of Venice are presented. The gay, idle, *insouciante*, and withal mysterious life of the Queen of the Adriatic, is depicted with as much truth and colour as in the pages of *Consuelo*. Cavaliers and rufflers, "witty as youthful poets in their wine," play in the street jests that may lead to "cracked crowns," or whisper beneath half-opened lattices vows that may bring a dagger slit in the doublet. Music of endless serenades rings through streets ignorant of all noise of traffic. The idlers upon the quays and banks rouse themselves from their slumbers to hurl execrations at the passing Jews, and the busy masque of mediæval Venice defiles with marvellous fidelity before our eyes. These things are good enough in themselves, and form an agreeable and appropriate background to a picture. Unfortunately, however, in the present case, these *are* the picture. To accept as a performance of the "Merchant of Venice" such a representation as took place in these surroundings would involve a complete abandonment of all that has been held indispensable to histrionic art. "The world is still deceived with ornament," says Bassanio, before he chooses the leaden casket. This view, apparently, has prevailed with the management. In the present instance, however, the later lines of the same speech will, we think, supply the lesson—

Thus ornament is but the guiled shore
To a most dangerous sea.

Mr. Coghlan, under whose direction the whole has, to some extent, been produced, and who himself plays *Shylock*,

has sought to divest the performance of rant. In itself the endeavour is creditable. He has, however, sunk it to the level of a recitation. Few plays require more careful treatment than this. A central interest, which deepens almost into tragedy, is framed in scenes of delicious comedy. In the present performance the serious interest of the piece disappeared, buried in spectacle, and that the lighter scenes escaped the same fate was due to the genius of one actress. A more remarkable instance of collapse has seldom been witnessed. Mr. Coghlan is an intelligent man, who can point to many successes in a short career. So completely did he fail, however, to grasp the part, or to render intelligible his conception, that during the trial scene the audience scarcely seemed conscious of his existence, and the proceedings might almost have continued without his presence. Against this regrettable miscarriage must be placed the triumph of Miss Terry, whose *Portia* revealed the gifts which are rarest on the English stage. More adequate expression has seldom been given to the light-heartedness of maidenhood, the perplexities and hesitations of love, and the ineffable content of gratified aspirations and ambitions. Not less successful were the scenes of badinage. Portia's address before the court was excellent, and the famous speech on mercy assumed new beauties from a correct and an exquisite delivery. A very noteworthy point in the performance was the womanly interest in Shylock—the endeavour to win him, for his own sake, from the pursuit of his grim resolve. The delivery of the lines—

Shylock, there's thrice thy money offered thee,
and—

Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your charge,
To stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death,

were dictated by sublime compassion. Beside Miss Terry's performance most of the other impersonations seemed weak. The most satisfactory were the *Duke* of



Miss Ellen Terry.

Mr. Collette and the *Antonio* of Mr. Acher ; Mr. Bancroft contented himself with the small part of the *Prince of Morocco*, of which he gave a picturesque representation ; Mr. A. Wood was *Launcelot Gobbo* ; Miss C. Addison was *Nerissa*, and Miss A. Wilton *Jessica*.

MR. GILBERT'S farcical comedy, produced at the St. James's Theatre, is less novel and original than most of his recent works. Its author's happiest results have generally been obtained when feminine wiles and lures have been the subjects of satire. In his best and most successful plays masculine selfishness is arrayed against extravagance of feminine impulse, and against that habit of hero-worship in the softer sex on which rests no small portion of male ascendancy. In this respect Mr. Gilbert's work is like that of his illustrious predecessor, Thackeray. The species of mock reverence and gallantry he displays in the treatment of women appears, however, to be exactly hit off by Chaucer, who, in "The Nonne Prest his Tale," makes Chaunteclere address Pertilot :—

For, al so siker as In principio,
Mulier est hominis confusio.
(Madame, the sentence of this Latyn is,
Woman is mannes joye and mannes blis)—

words which, so far as the idea they convey is concerned, would seem in place in the mouth of not a few of Mr. Gilbert's characters. In "Tom Cobb" the principal interest is masculine. The idea on which the action is based is whimsical. It is thin and poor, however, for the service it has to render, and it is elaborated with more care than humour. A man who, in order to escape from his creditors, shams death, and finds subsequently events are too strong for him, and prevent him from resuming his rashly discarded individuality, is,

in a situation of perplexity which it is easy to render amusing. Mr. Gilbert has, however, cast on one side the opportunities afforded him of showing the physical difficulties and mental disquietudes such a situation is likely to engender, and has made the assumption of a new individuality the cause of comic complications. Those evils which spring from the abandonment of the old name are of a kind that approach more nearly to melodrama than comedy; while those, on the contrary, he assumes with his new personality belong to the most reckless farce. As the work is avowedly farcical, this blending of incongruities might be justified by success. It can plead, however, no such vindication. Comic scenes, situations, and characters are obtained, and much of the dialogue is droll and stimulating. The whole, however, is wearisome at times and not too intelligible, and wants the consistency indispensable to a work of genuine art. An audience, grateful to Mr. Gilbert for frequent amusement, and sensible of what is meritorious in the present piece, had yet discretion to perceive shortcomings; and the favourable verdict pronounced upon the piece was modified by brief but distinct expressions of disapproval. A more comic effect might easily have been produced with the means at hand, and the elaboration of the self-begotten perplexities of the hero would have added to the probability of the play as much as to its interest. The representation is adequate. Miss Litton, who has of late presented some of the most effective pictures the modern stage has witnessed, displays as a romantic heroine a power of mock heroics which is almost unrivalled. Her most extravagant efforts are obtained without any sacrifice of grace or art. As her brother, equally high-flown and sentimental with herself, Mr. Hill exhibits the assumed stolidity and gravity which, in connection with a full sense of drollery, make him one of the most genuine of low comedians.

It needed the advent of an actor such as Signor Salvini May 15, 1875. to introduce to the English public a play by a writer such as Soumet. A man of note in his day, and an accepted leader of the Romanticists, Soumet, even while he lived, was regarded as jejune and old-fashioned, and now, thirty years after his death, he has been the victim of the deep oblivion that has often befallen his *confrères* of the Academy. "Clytemnestre," "Saul," "Cléopâtre," "Jeanne d'Arc" even, which roused at one time transports of enthusiasm, sleep peacefully on the shelves of the Théâtre Français or the Odéon. "Norma" survives, but it may be doubted whether one in a hundred of those who listen to Bellini's music is aware who is the inventor of the libretto. The cause for this neglect may be guessed from the Italian version of "Le Gladiateur" which now occupies the stage of Drury Lane. In all his sympathies except one, Soumet was a classicist. His regard for colour, to which he sacrifices most of the requirements of dramatic art, threw him into the school of the Romanticists; but his work was half-hearted, as must be all labour accomplished in defiance of convictions. In "Le Gladiateur," produced at the Théâtre Français, in 1841, Soumet was aided by his daughter, Madame Beuvain d'Altenheim. In the treatment of the subject one can trace the influence of Klopstock, the object of Soumet's special admiration. Most of the early scenes are didactic and prosaic, and three out of five acts are over before the action is strengthened with anything fit to be called situation or incident. The story is that of a gladiator, who recognises in a girl he is ordered to slay in the arena his own daughter. His prayers and entreaties are vain, and he is compelled in the end to take the life of his child in order to save her honour. In colour the whole is remarkable. Contrasted before us are the brutal indifference to the pain of others of the gladiator, who supplies the public in the amphitheatre with the most fiercely relished of all pleasures, and the triumphant self-

immolation of the Christian. Roman citizens decked with roses recline at voluptuous feasts, waited upon by slaves who have neither claim nor right to anything, not even the space they occupy, in whom human emotions cease to be respectable, and to whom the sanctuary affords no shelter. The fugitive Nazarene hides in the Catacombs, the white-robed priest officiates in the temple, and the empress, attended by her lictors, presides in the amphitheatre! Behind all is heard the roar of wild beasts, slowly starving in anticipation of the approaching combat. The resemblance of this motive to that of "The Last Days of Pompeii" cannot fail to strike the spectator. Lord Lytton was, however, first in the field, and it is possible that Soumet, who took his "Emilia" from the "Kenilworth" of Sir Walter Scott, was indebted to the English romance, then in the height of popularity. Guiraud's "Virginie," produced on the 28th of April, 1827, shortly after the death of Talma, who was to have played Virginius, has, however, a strong resemblance to much of the action, and it is more than probable that a search among the numerous classical plays of the same epoch would reveal further indebtedness. Corneille's "Polyeucte" and the "Caligula" of Alexandre Dumas approach closely "Le Gladiateur" in conception and in point of execution. What motive induced Signor Salvini to select this play in preference to "Polyeucte," to "The Gladiators of Ravenna" of Frederick Hulm, otherwise the Count Münch von Bellinghausen, and other works of more character and power, is at once apparent. In the work of Soumet the interest centres in the gladiator, other characters serving only as foils to its grandeur, while in the plays which in story most closely approach it the main interest is feminine. An interpretation such as that of Signor Salvini affords "Le Gladiateur" a chance its author could scarcely have anticipated, and forces, so to speak, into evidence merits that otherwise might have passed unseen. Ligier, his predecessor in the part, gave a

certain brutal splendour to the character which Signor Salvini passes over, but failed to make it attractive or sympathetic.

The beauty of Signor Salvini's acting is incontestable. Each varying emotion is stirred as we see him, with head erect, face successive and recurrent waves of calamity. A slave in the presence of men without hearts and gods without power, there remains only for him and those dearer to him than life the slave's one refuge—death. His first entry discloses a rude and illiterate man, careless concerning the new doctrines and theories he hears in the Catacombs, and occupied only with the burning desire to find again his child, stolen from him in infancy. His actions are equally barbaric and picturesque. When he arraigns the impotent gods, and threatens their altars, it is no Prometheus defying the thunderbolts; it is a fierce and turbulent mind conscious of the strength of the frame it controls, and seeking to enclose his enemies and rend them. The movements of his arms are those of a man who tears at the throat of a tiger. In the scenes with Faustina, the empress mother, to whose unscrupulous cruelty he owes his worst calamities, he comports himself as one accustomed to render homage, but free to manifest rebuke and loathing, by that indifference to death which raises the slave out of reach of his master. A fine effect is obtained when, seeking refuge in the Temple of Jupiter, and hearing that the shrine extends no protection to slaves, he strikes the statue and defies the deity, to whom the sight of chains and suffering fails to appeal. In the fourth act the gladiator appears in the circus, and essays with practised hand the weapons to which he will shortly entrust his life. His bearing is bold and jubilant, and he addresses with easy irony "his dear Romans," who greet him with a shout of recognition. In place of the famished lion or the Dacian warrior he expects to encounter comes, however, a Christian maiden. Disliking his task, he seeks to evade its accom-

plishment. For the maiden, however, there is no choice except death at his hands or from the maw of the lion. He lifts accordingly the veil to strike strongly and mercifully, and on the bared shoulder recognises the birth-mark of his child. From this moment to the time when, despairing, he takes the life he is powerless to save, his acting is supreme. There is more pain and agitation than surprise at finding his daughter in the woman whom, from some inward and mysterious impulse, he had felt bound to protect. As he turns up his face, fear, anxiety, and supplication chase each other across it. His eye sweeps slowly round the circle, seeking one sign of human sympathy, and finding none. A blank wall of stony-hearted cruelty faces him, and the only effect of his appeals is to rouse a yell of dissatisfaction when it appears that the public may be cheated of its rights. All doubt on this question is soon at rest. The priest speaks: "Lo schiavo non ha figli"—"A slave has no children". In his fear for his newly-found offspring he towers above her, absolutely covering her with his love, then bears her across the arena taking from her neck and brow the kisses he has hungered for so long, and now has so little time to collect. So superb is the bearing, indeed, and so strong the notion of the miraculous strength of physical frame inspired by love, that the device of overturning a wall in presence of the audience to reach again his child, invented to give semblance of strength to weaker actors, detracts from the impression he has conveyed.

Fine, however, as is the impersonation, there is one point on which we feel it is open to improvement. The continued practice of butchery in the amphitheatre communicates to the face and bearing a callous indifference and brutality we fail to perceive. Nobility should reveal itself behind this. So dignified and noble is the appearance of Signor Salvini, it is difficult to believe in his practice of a profession like that of gladiator. A stronger expression

of blood-lust is necessary to the full development of the character. This, so far as we can trust past records, Ligier seems to have supplied. The general performance was higher than that of "Othello". Signora L. Papà Giovagnoli as *Faustina* displayed flashes of genuine power.

MR. BYRON'S "Weak Woman" is one of his happiest efforts. It can scarcely be considered a comedy in the common acceptation of the word, but it is more symmetrical than most of his works, as bright as any, and comparatively free from those verbal distortions and quibbles which have often led Mr. Byron astray. It has some characterisation also. The chief defects appear to spring from a course now common in the production of comedy, that, *viz.*, of writing with a view to the company by which the piece has to be played. In dramas of small pretension this course is defensible enough; it is fatal to high-class work. Let us have a good comedy, and let the company that can act it then be sought. It will, we venture to say, be quickly forthcoming. "Weak Woman" turns upon a will made by an eccentric bachelor, in which, in order to defeat fortune-hunters, he leaves his property to one of two nieces, who are to marry at the same time, and only discover after marriage who is the heiress. There is much mirth in the action, and the result is a success. Mr. Terry, acting in a comic part, was far too farcical for comedy, but proved greatly to the taste of the audience, and was clever in his extravagance. Other parts were fairly played, Miss Marion Terry marking a distinct advance in a career that is full of promise.

A ROMANTIC drama, by Mr. H. Herman, produced at May 22, 1875. the Charing Cross Theatre, with the title of "Jeanne Dubarry," is a curious attempt to do for the mistress of Louis the Fifteenth what M. Victor Hugo has done for

the mistress of Richelieu. The characters of the two heroines are, however, scarcely more alike than the talents of the dramatists. Between her to whom the Cardinal in the height of his power laid siege for years, and for whose sake he altered the laws of France, and the coarse-minded and foul-mouthed woman who sacrificed at the foot of the scaffold a hundred innocent heads in a vain attempt to save her own polluted existence, there is nothing in common except the bald fact of want of chastity. No possible treatment can lend dignity to Madame Dubarry, or arouse the slightest sympathy with her career, or belief in the possibility of her amendment. The mere attempt to do so is apt to breed resentment in the mind. An effort has been made to incorporate with "Marion Delorme" portions of "La Fille de Madame Angot". We have, accordingly, in the play a curious complication. Madame Dubarry, who at one time was known as Mdlle. Lange, is represented as taking the name of Jeanne Delorme, in order to pass through adventures, a portion of which is ascribed in one play to another Delorme, while the remaining portion, in a second play, is attributed to another Mdlle. Lange. The treatment is less confused, and, indeed, less incapable than such an imbroglio might lead one to expect. There is, in fact, a certain measure of force and earnestness which, if the subject were less repellent, and the arrangement more dexterous, might have given the whole a chance of existence. A scene with which the second act concludes might, with alterations, be rendered really effective. The story shows Dubarry under a false name winning the love of a young nobleman, whose only apparent recommendation is that he is the most inveterate of her libellers. Bitter atonement is made for the success with which her early efforts are crowned, since the hero on discovering the truth uses to herself and her royal lover language which brings upon him condemnation to death. In his cell he is visited by

Jeanne, who vainly tempts him to escape by means of a blank pardon she possesses. Like his prototype, Didier, he sees only the shameful side of the proposal. It is useless to follow further the parallel between the two plays or the story of the more modern. The acting was not of a kind to give "Jeanne Dubarry" any special interest. Miss Lynd, who charged herself with so ungrateful a *rôle*, had not strength to render it sympathetic. Other parts were played by actors unused to swords and hair-powder, and the whole performance took but a slight hold upon the public.

COMPARED with their French rivals, English dramatists May 29, 1875. seem like guerillas beside regular troops. There is no pretence of obedience to discipline. Each man makes war on his own account, and the success or failure of an individual undertaking does not in the slightest degree influence the general campaign. Of the three writers who supply the public with nine-tenths of what claim to be modern comedies, Mr. Albery is the most independent and undisciplined. Mr. Gilbert aims at shapeliness and regularity of composition, and is eccentric only in the choice of subject, his happiest efforts being those in which his world is ideal and his characters are fantastic. Mr. Byron burnishes conventional and old-fashioned characters until they shine with all the gloss of novelty, and brightens commonplace situations and action with dialogue not less amusing than extravagant and out of place. Mr. Albery lastly asserts an entire independence of law or control. While out-doing Mr. Gilbert in fantasy, he leaves his characters in what is supposed to be a real world, and he introduces into the midst of a carnival of madness proceedings so stagey and commonplace that Mr. Byron in his moment of utter need would shrink from their employment.

His "Spendthrift; or, the Scrivener's Daughter," given at the Olympic Theatre, is announced as a comedy of adventure, in five acts. The title originally chosen, "The Good Samaritan," was abandoned, as we understand, in consequence of an objection to its scriptural derivation. Had this name been retained, and had the piece been further described as a whimsicality, or something of the kind, it would have come before the public with a better chance of being comprehended and accepted. As it stands, it is more like a perplexing dream than a rational composition. Place the scene in fairyland, the incidents would find acceptance. There is a sort of sequence about the events which, in a world where motive and custom are quite different from what they now are, might render them comprehensible. In commonplace and matter-of-fact regions, however, we hesitate to believe in the possibility of men being influenced by such motives or led to such actions as are presented. A portion of the plot will serve to speak for the remainder. A gentleman, going home at night, sees a stranger in the hands of the constables. Being a good Samaritan, he takes charge of him, and offers to lead him home. In a pocket-book he finds a name and address, which he, not unnaturally, but erroneously, assumes to be those of the bearer. The drunkard is accordingly led to the house of a stranger, and, with due solemnity, marshalled by his friend into the library or drawing-room. No servant has been aroused. In the room, asleep, is a lady, assumably the wife of the drunkard. Without awaking her our good Samaritan officiates as the valet to his helpless friend, taking off his wig, hat, boots, and coat, and sending him to bed in what he assumes to be his room. Bridging over the events which follow, and which would take some time to narrate, we pass at once to the conclusion of this episode. The host, returning, furious with jealousy, from an exploration of the neighbourhood, finds a coat not his in his drawing-room, a

stranger occupying the bedroom of his son, and a second installed in that of his wife.

Absurd and improbable as all this seems baldly stated, it appears yet more preposterous when the chain of events which lead to the position is made apparent. The only verdict, indeed, that can be passed upon the piece is that it is lunatic. It abounds with fine touches, it is full of cleverness of construction and wit of dialogue. Playful and graceful allusions are not wanting, ingenuity is redundant, and good and thoroughly dramatic situations are obtained. Yet the result is a failure, which the cheers of a good-natured and singularly appreciative audience cannot conceal. Abundant proof is afforded by late experiments that Mr. Albery is the most original, witty, and inventive of English dramatists and that he is also the least capable of giving a fitting shape to the quaint ideas with which his brain teems. But one course appears open to him, if the world is to benefit by his efforts. He must take an experienced and prosaic collaborateur, who will supply him with ballast, and keep him generally in order.

The acting was adequate. Mr. G. W. Anson, who bids fair to be one of the best low comedians our stage has seen, was admirable as a tipsy baronet. Miss Fowler, whose progress has been remarkable, and who, in not more than two or three years, has succeeded in proving herself an artist, played with much vivacity the part of a gay and coquettish heroine. Mr. Neville gave a spirited and intelligent rendering of the hero, and Mrs. Stephens, Mrs. Viner, Messrs. Harcourt, Stephens, Vollaire, and Forbes Robertson, acted with an *ensemble* now happily more common upon the London stage than it was a few years ago.

IN playing Hamlet before an English audience Signor June 5, 1875.
Salvini claims the highest honours of art, and challenges

the most outspoken and deliberate verdict of criticism. English acquiescence in the pretensions of foreigners with regard to Hamlet has been more apparent than real. When Teutonic enthusiasm maintains that the character belongs to Germany rather than England, and asserts that German criticism first discovered its significance and interpreted its aim, the boast is received with a silence which is ascribable to amusement rather than apathy. Foreign interpreters are received with courtesy and attention, and their performances are studied with interest involving a recognition of the compliment paid to our drama. Herr Emil Devrient, however, and M. Rouvière have left little abiding impression upon our stage, and the influence of Mr. Fechter is valuable rather for what it has removed than for what it has supplied.

Will the influence of Signor Salvini be more powerful and more durable than that of his predecessors? Here is a question it would be rashness to answer. That his first appearance was a triumph is established fact. In an audience composed largely of actors, Signor Salvini obtained a reception such as no previous Hamlet, we are disposed to believe, has ever witnessed. Respectful and earnest attention accompanied him throughout, every outburst elicited a sympathetic response, and the manifestations at the close of the acts had so much of southern warmth that the actor might have been excused for believing himself among his own countrymen. Enthusiastic as it was, this reception was not excessive. No actor of our day has brought to the part of Hamlet equal intelligence and mastery of art, equal ripeness of judgment and perfection of method. From beginning to end the conception was sustained, while the illustrations by which it was made apparent were subtle in suggestion and splendid in effect.

The triumph obtained is the more significant as the version in which the actor appears is contemptible. While losing, like all translations, the quaint, terse, and pro-

verbial style of utterance characteristic of Shakspeare, it is more commonplace and conventional than that of Ducis, and almost as daring in excision. Among the parts which disappear are the scene with the recorders, that with the players, Hamlet's wild banter of his friends upon the disappearance of the ghost, and those portions of the play generally which show Hamlet as the man of reflection. One instance of the want of intelligence in alterations which might solace the shade of Tate will suffice for all. The third act closes with Hamlet's advice to his mother:—

Vanne. Il tuo re cerca;
Ogni mia voce a lui ripeti, e narra
Che verace non è, ma simulata
Questa demenza mia, si vanne—Oh madre—Addio.

These words, delivered with mocking emphasis, are not only at variance with the attitude of Hamlet as previously exhibited, but derogatory from the character of the Queen, whose love for her son, winning from him pardon and re-awakening affection, constitutes her sole apology. To the defects of the version may very probably be ascribed some sense of shortcoming lurking behind the idea of triumph conveyed overpoweringly by the nature of the acting and that of its reception.

In all tragic acting criticism has necessarily to concern itself with the conception and the execution. The actor may, it is true, claim a measure of the right accorded the author in his treatment of historical characters. As the dramatist is judged by the strength of the character he has depicted rather than by its historical accuracy, so the actor may advance a right to take his own conception and work it out his own way. So long as no violation of the expressed intention of the poet is attempted, this may be conceded. It is none the less true that the world has seen Hamlets in which the execution was masterly while the conception was so weak as to be dishonouring to

Shakspeare. Such was, in some respects, the Hamlet of Mr. Fechter. No charge of this kind can be brought against Signor Salvini. His Hamlet is fine in conception ; the only room for doubt is whether it is the Hamlet Shakspeare drew. The view is, at least, weaker than the interpretation, and there are moments when we ask whether Hamlet may not disappear and be lost behind beauty of exposition. It may be conceded that a single performance of Hamlet in a large theatre, by Signor Salvini, is little upon which to form a decisive judgment. So far as we can judge, Signor Salvini presents Hamlet as a man full of generous and glowing impulses, saddened by the proofs around him of falsehood and crime in those to whom he has been wont to look with most affection. He shows him vacillating and uncertain in mood, timid in action, and shamming madness in order to hide infirmity of purpose and prepare a deed he has not heart to execute. This view is more than defensible, it is wholly and absolutely true. It is not, however, all the truth. Behind Hamlet is Orestes. A father's murder has to be revenged. It is not, moreover, the blood unjustly spilt that cries to Heaven ; it is a claim absolute and direct, for vengeance, in which human authority is backed by the supreme command of fate. The father demands the son's arm and sword ; but that father, coming again as he does from beyond the portal of the grave, is fate. From the moment that this mission is upon him Hamlet is under the spell of destiny ; he is a minister of divine decrees, a sword in the hand of justice, certain itself to be broken while it smites. Still more bitter appear to him now the problems his surroundings as well as his nature had been apt to beget. Before he knows the sum of his own calamity he re-shapes the cry of the Preacher—

How weary, flat, stale, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world.

The Ghost appears, and thenceforward the mind, eager and questioning, strives to get rid of the unsought burden thrust upon it. Shift as it will, however, the pressure becomes heavier; fate itself interposes to check every attempt at evasion; and the final action, which seems ascribable to a desire to revenge his own slaughter as much as that of his father, is yet felt to be approaching and inevitable. "If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come; the readiness is all," are words the downright fatalism of which contrasts strikingly with the questioning in the first, and, indeed, all the early soliloquies. Signor Salvini fails to convey this sense of the empire of fate. He is too interested in what proceeds around him—too tender, too sympathetic, too sorrowful even.

Leaving aside this one point of conception, with these views on which many will not agree, and coming to the interpretation, this is, indeed, superb. Hamlet's bearing before the Ghost, his manner of watching the king during the play-scene, his delirium as he throws into the air the loose leaves of the manuscript he has kept in his hand during the performance; his treatment of his mother; his recoil upon the re-appearance of his father; his duel with Laertes; and his dying-scene, with the keen craving of a weak nature for those demonstrations of human sympathy which stronger spirits would scorn, are splendid proofs of the combination of intellectual capacity and physical means. The humanising influence of the farewell to Horatio is, indeed, an admirably characteristic trait, on which a northern invention would not readily have hit. A strong nature may say, like Vittoria Corrombona:—

I shall welcome death,
As princes do some great ambassadors.
I'll meet thy weapon half way;

and may insist on precedence in slaughter:—

I will be waited on in death, my servant
Shall never go before me.

Hamlet demands, or at least welcomes, the “pious drops,” even while he feels that death is a release, and conjures his friend :—

Absent thee from felicity a while,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story.

Not less interesting than the Othello, and scarcely perhaps, if keenly scrutinised, less illustrative, Signor Salvini's Hamlet, while it is one of those performances which stand out in art as landmarks, fails, perhaps, to afford any large amount of suggestion to those who have made the character of Hamlet their study. The light that breaks over Hamlet can, indeed, scarcely be expected to come from the south.

June 15, 1875. THE influence of French schools of art upon the English drama does not end with the speedy production upon our stage of the freshest or most striking of Parisian novelties. In cases where plot and characters are of home growth a certain amount of indebtedness to French models in method and in conception is still not seldom traceable. No single French play or novel can be advanced as having supplied the “New Magdalen,” a character which is yet as direct an outcome of French literature and French modes of thought as the latest heroine of M. Dumas *fil*s or M. Émile Augier. “A Nine Days' Wonder,” by Mr. Hamilton Aïdé, is, apparently, of Parisian origin. It is advanced as original, and is, indeed, a version of a novel by the same author, the publication of which it anticipated, as a means of escaping the piracy to which, in the present discreditable state of the laws

affecting literary property, the novelist is exposed. Of the essentials to a drama, only one, the language, is English, and this is the weakest portion of the play. Intrigue, characters, sentiment, construction, all are French—more characteristically French, indeed, than those of any recent adaptation, with, perhaps, one exception. So completely masters of dramatic art are the French that a man who has not daring for a self-borne flight can scarcely do better than study their movements. Mr. Gilbert alone, among English dramatists from whom the public expects a constant supply of novelty, has strength of wing, for Mr. Byron's bat-like flights can scarcely be reckoned as soaring, and Mr. Albery's course is so bold and so eccentric that it takes him mostly outside the ken of ordinary gazers.

Maternal sacrifice is, broadly stated, the subject of Mr. Aïdé's plot. His heroine, Mrs. Fitzroy, is a combination of Clorinde in "*L'Aventurière*," and Leonora in "*Dalila*," with other characters in modern French comedy. Married to a man who has used her beauty as a lure and a decoy, and has repaid her assistance with cruelty and even with violence, she has eloped from him. A duel between her husband and the companion of her flight has ended in the death of the former, and left her free to contract a second marriage, which has proved not much more happy than the first. Death, natural this time, has set her once more free, but left her dependent upon her son by the first marriage. Christian Douglas, who, to avoid the shame attending his early associations, has changed his name, allows his mother half his income, but abstains from seeing her. The pair thus severed meet at length under strange conditions. Undeterred from the contemplation of a fresh marriage by the bitter experience of her previous nuptials, Mrs. Fitzroy is seeking to obtain a hold over the heart of Mr. Vavasour, a widower whose first offers, a quarter of a century previously, she had refused. While

residing under the shelter of his roof, weaving ingeniously her toils around him, and shunning as much as possible the persecution of the village gossips and scandal-mongers, already too much disposed to speculate and form the worst conclusions concerning her, Mrs. Fitzroy is startled by the appearance of her son. Her delirious entreaties that he will depart, and leave her in peace in the last shelter she can find, prevail upon the youth, who retires from the field. When, however, the mother finds that this son was betrothed to the daughter of her host, and that in taking his departure he has sacrificed his happiness for a mother who had deserted his infancy, her better nature awakes. A sacrifice such as this must not be accomplished. She it is who will depart. For a moment Mr. Vavasour and his daughter are under the impression that both have been fooled. An explanation shows that Christian is true, and that the motive to flight on the part of Mrs. Fitzroy is noble.

The view of the relations between mother and son Mr. Aïdé has taken is wholly French. English ideas impose upon Christian no such necessity or duty of sacrifice as that on which he acts, and English sentiment regards with little favour such a struggle between parent and child as is presented. Only in French art, moreover, is the presence possible in a house such as that of Mr. Vavasour of a woman whose antecedents are as those of Mrs. Fitzroy. As a result, perhaps, of its essentially French character, the play has a neatness of construction rare in English art. Its action is easy and natural, and the situations obtained are fairly dramatic. Some of the contrasts afforded are, indeed, striking, and the scene in which father and daughter, equally apprehensive, peruse jointly a letter which to the one brings life and hope, and to the other despair and death, is highly ingenious. Youth is, of course, the victor in the strife, since literature, like life itself and like fate, is youth's praiser and sycophant.



W^l John Hare.

Nine days serve for the action, which passes in two scenes. The dialogue is commonplace. Some ingenuity is shown in the treatment of the comic characters, most of which are close sketches from life. In the lighter scenes the acting is praiseworthy. Miss Robertson fails, however, to render sympathetic the character of a woman who, with the knowledge of a shameful secret in her heart, ventures to present herself in a house into which she should never have entered. Admirable control of resources is shown in the scenes of passionate entreaty, but emotional acting is not Miss Robertson's *forte*, and her pathos was never moving. We venture to indicate to Miss Robertson an oversight, remarkable in the case of an artist so clever as herself. While her hair in front is thickly streaked with white, to indicate the ravages of time, a profusion of golden ringlets behind exhibit themselves in startling mockery. Mr. Hare's performance of *Mr. Vavasour* has all the minute realism of his well-known method, and is equally picturesque and effective. Mr. Kendal is earnest and manly as the young soldier, and Miss Hollingshead tender and sympathetic as *Kate Vavasour*. When a little evidence of effort is banished, Miss Hollingshead will prove herself a valuable actress. Two pictures, each excellent in its way, are presented by Miss Hughes and Mr. R. Cathcart. The former gives a capital delineation of an old maid, and the latter portrays to the life a meek curate. Mr. Cathcart is a conscientious and capable actor, whose merits should some day receive a recognition hitherto denied them.

FOR her benefit, at the Princess's Theatre, Miss June 26, 1875
Helen Barry made her first appearance as Katharine in
"Katharine and Petruchio," Garrick's compressed version
of "The Taming of the Shrew". Only on similar occasions

is there a chance of seeing this most amusing, spirited, and boisterous of Shakspeare's comedies. Those, however, who witness the performance of the piece as it is now given are easily reconciled to the idea that it will not soon be repeated. Times have changed since Garrick was allowed to mutilate Shakspeare at his pleasure, and the emendations which passed muster with a less critical public are now, or should be, wholly intolerable. Genest, whose verdicts, as a rule, are in advance of his age, declares that this play, as it is altered, is the best after-piece on the stage. Its mirthfulness is, however, obtained by the sacrifice of Shakspeare's intention. Those who know Shakspeare only in the closet will not believe how completely he is travestied. A single instance will suffice to show the nature of the alterations that were perpetrated by a man who was considered in his day a Shakspearian authority. One of the means adopted by Petruchio to tame his foward spouse is extravagance of unreasonable complaint, which shall cow her and disgust her with her own violence. Thus, when the cook brings in well-appointed meats he declares them burnt to a coal ; and when the tailor supplies costly and fashionable attire he pronounces it unwearable. Katharine stands thus a chance of being sent to bed supperless, and conducted to her father's house with no change of dress. In the unreasonableness lies all the motive. "The meat were well if you were so contented," says the disconsolate wife. Of the head-gear she declares, "I like the cap" ; and of the habit :—

I never saw a better-fashioned gown,
More quaint, more pleasing, nor more commendable.

When, however, the meat is represented as in truth black as a coal, when hat and dress are caricatures, the wrath of Petruchio becomes justifiable, and the only thing inexplicable is Katharine's readiness to accept such things.

So filthy is the joint produced that the stage business ordinarily practised, and now again repeated, is to make Petruchio rub it on the face of the cook, who departs looking like a negro. Every kind of absurdity is permitted. The attendants waiting upon Petruchio are like the comic servants of pantomime, and the tailor, when Grumio menaces him, stands in the middle of the bonnet-box he has brought, and asks, "Would you hit a man in his own shop?" That these things produce roars of laughter may easily be conceived. If the name of Shakspeare is removed from such fooling, moreover, it may be pardonable enough. When announced as his it is wholly indefensible. It was on the 18th of March, 1754, Garrick first produced this travesty. Yates as Grumio, Woodward as Petruchio, and Mrs. Pritchard first, and subsequently Mrs. Clive, as Katharine, shared the responsibility of the invention of the comic business.

Miss Barry plays *Katharine* with some force, and looks the part thoroughly. She is, however, apt to smile too much on slight provocation, and her bad temper seems only skin-deep. Mr. W. Rignold is the exact representative of the *Petruchio* whom Garrick, not Shakspeare, conceived. Miss Carlisle plays the part of *Bianca*, now reduced to a mere shadow, and Mr. Brittain Wright, as *Grumio*, gives extravagant emphasis to all the absurdities associated with the part. Such performances are disgraceful to our national art, and it is only by transferring on to the shoulders of their predecessors the responsibility that our actors can escape a serious charge.

CHAPTER IV.

Princess's : " *The Lady of Lyons* ".—*Globe* : " *Love and Honour*," a comedy drama, by *Campbell Clarke*.—*Drury Lane* : " *The Shaughraun*," a drama in four acts, by *Dion Boucicault*.—*Gaiety* : " *My Awful Dad*," a comedy in two acts, by *Charles Mathews*.—*Strand* : " *Flamingo*," a folie musicale, by *F. Hay and F. W. Green*.

Aug. 14, 1875. THE performance, at the *Princess's*, by *Miss Ellen Terry*, of the character of *Pauline*, in the " *Lady of Lyons*," gives to an entertainment intended for one night only, and appealing to a very limited section of the public, an interest a similar occasion has seldom claimed. Its effect is to set the seal upon a growing reputation, and to make evident the fact that an actress of a high, if not the highest, order has arisen in our midst. One of the pleasantest, inasmuch as it is one of the rarest tasks the critic is called upon to discharge is that of heralding to the world the advent of genius. So vast a space separates, ordinarily, aspiration from accomplishment, the critic's duty becomes merged in that of the censor, and the public comes to regard him as one whose sole function is to point out inequalities of workmanship and failure of effort. In the case of things dramatic and histrionic, it is rarely indeed the critic can do more than suggest some promise of talent behind crude performance—some glimpse of meaning or intention in a commonplace rendering. There is, accordingly, a pleasure of no ordinary kind in

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announcing a fact Miss Terry's recent performances have fully established, viz., that an actress has developed in whom there is that perception of analogies, that insight into mysteries, and that power of interpretation, on which the world has bestowed the name of genius. Circumstances took Miss Terry from the stage at a time when men dimly perceived in her the promise which has since been realised. It is probable that some delay in that maturity of style indispensable to perfection in histrionic art has resulted from this break in her career. The interval can scarcely have been misspent, however, since Miss Terry re-appeared on the stage with ripened powers and with improved method. After one or two attractive performances in parts which showed one side only of her talent, Miss Terry went to the Prince of Wales's Theatre, and played Portia, in the "Merchant of Venice," and Clara Douglas in "Money". To these *rôles* is now added a third, the result of the three being to prove Miss Terry a subtle interpreter of poetic character, and an admirable exponent of various phases of passion.

Physical advantages are, of course, an all-important portion of the stock-in-trade of an actress. The long, tender lines of a singularly graceful figure add wonderful picturesqueness to the illustrations Miss Terry affords. Her presentation of Pauline comprised a series of pictures each more graceful than the preceding, and all too good for the lackadaisical play in which she appeared. They would have been perfectly in place as illustrations to some Border ballad or legend of the "Round Table". More important, however, than this gift of picturesqueness, magical as is its effect in illustrating art, is the power of getting inside a character and revealing it to the public. This, in the case of Portia, Miss Terry does, showing one of the loveliest of Shakspearian creations in colours in which few among students even had dressed it, flooding it, so to speak, with a light of illumination. As interpretation, her Pauline

is less successful. Pride, which in the character of Pauline divides the empire with Love, in the interpretation makes scarcely a fight. Conceding, however, that the conception is wrong to this extent, the impersonation is singularly fine. A score of natural and artistic touches reveal the tenderness and longing of the woman's heart, while the rendering of the fourth act, in which Pauline seeks to force herself from the environing arms of her parents and join her departing lover, whose words of farewell sting her to madness, is one of those pieces of electrical acting that produce upon the mind an effect of which art in other developments seems scarcely capable. It is too early yet to gauge fully the talent which has revealed itself. It seems probable that Miss Terry's powers will be restrained to depicting the grace, tenderness, and passion of love. In the short scene in the third act, in which Pauline chides her lover for treachery, the actress scarcely rises to the requisite indignation. Limiting, however, what is to be hoped from her within the bounds indicated, what chance is there not afforded? Juliet in the stronger scenes would be, we should fancy, outside the physical resources of the artist. Beatrice, Rosalind, Viola, Imogen, Miranda, and a score other characters of the most delicate and fragrant beauty are, however, all within what appears to be her range. In the present state of public feeling respecting the Shakspearian drama, it will be strange indeed if some manager does not take the opportunity of mounting some of those plays for which her talent is so eminently adapted. The period during which an actress can play such parts with effect is brief; and a portion of Miss Terry's career has already been lost so far as the stage is concerned. There will be regrettable waste if talent so specially suited to the Shakspearian drama is confined to Lord Lytton's facile sentiment and sparkling rhetoric. Mr. Coghlan lacks much of being able to play the parts he assumes. His *Claude Melnotte* is weak and

unequal. He has, however, the "making of an actor," and is at least the most competent of our *jeunes premiers*.

THE annual experiment made by Mdlle. Beatrice in Aug. 21, 1875 producing, one after another, in London, adaptations of those pieces which have obtained most vogue in Paris, would have more interest and value were the conditions with which English art is environed less oppressive. The change of aspect which social relations receive when a play is transferred from the French stage to the English is fatal to dramatic effect, and not one in ten of the adaptations which constitute the most important portion of each year's dramatic novelty does justice to the original, or gives the English playgoer any insight into French modes of thought or workmanship. In the case of "Love and Honour," as Mr. Campbell Clarke has christened his version of "Monsieur Alphonse," by M. Dumas *fils*, the alteration that has been made is slight. It is none the less destructive of value, and even of meaning. In "Monsieur Alphonse," M. Dumas preaches boldly the lesson of pardon for adultery which Kotzebue timidly advanced in the "Stranger". His heroine, Raymonde de Montaiglin, has been false to her marriage vows, under circumstances which are supposed by the author to palliate her offence, but, according to an average English verdict, add to its culpability. Married happily to a man who has enveloped her in love and trust, Raymonde has sacrificed his honour and her own to one for whom she retains no feeling except contempt. No excuse of passion can be pleaded, nor can she even advance the unsatisfied longing of the *femme incomprise*. The only plea to be urged in her behalf is that which Watts has enshrined in two lines, probably, whether for purpose of banter or serious counsel, the most familiar in the language:—

Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.

From this miserable intrigue—of which the heroine, so soon as she is able to take a view of her own conduct, is poignantly and deservedly ashamed—springs a daughter. During years the girl, brought up in solitude by her father, has received occasional visits from her mother. A contemplated marriage between Octave, known only to his child as Monsieur Alphonse, and Madame Guichard, a vulgar woman, whom he seeks for the sake of her fortune, necessitates the finding of a new home for the child. Octave hits upon the plan of confiding it to M. de Montaiglin. Unsuspectingly the husband accepts the trust, and Adrienne becomes a resident in the same house with her mother. It is needless to say what processes lead to the discovery, by M. de Montaiglin, of the relations between his wife and the stranger he has adopted. Under such conditions a mother could not be expected to guard long her secret. It is, accordingly, revealed. Accepting a life of subsequent fidelity and devotion as proof sufficient of penitence, M. de Montaiglin forgives ungrudgingly and unquestioningly his wife, and secures her happiness by formally claiming the child as his own.

Whatever value is possessed by the play lies in the moral rather than the treatment. This is the exact point the adapter has assailed. Representing the offence of Raymonde as taking place before her acquaintance with M. de Montaiglin, and attributing it to a sham marriage, he takes from the heroine all culpability and from the hero all opportunity of sacrifice. The foundation of the play thus removed, the edifice crumbles with a breath. What is presented to the spectator is a series of people telling an overwhelming number of lies for the purpose of concealing what needs no concealment.

Some signs of the worth of a play which has been regarded as the *chef-d'œuvre* of its author survive this murderous treatment. Nothing can impair the effect of the really dramatic scene in which the wife's rhapsody over the child forces upon her husband the conviction that it is her own. The comic scenes, moreover, retain their mirthfulness, and have, indeed, a drollery the author was far from intending to communicate. Thanks to the pronounced style into which, sooner or later, most English comedians are forced, the scenes of love-making between Octave and Madame Guichard degenerate into broad farce. Against this style of interpretation it is useless to protest. With an amount of ignorance and stupidity that would seem incredible, were not fresh proof of its existence constantly supplied, audiences remain insensible to fine acting, and burst into applause the moment they perceive extravagance. The serious portions of the play were fairly presented. Mdlle. Beatrice acted in her grave and not unimpressive style. Mr. Frank Harvey made the most of the disagreeable character of *Octave*, and Mr. Carter-Edwards gave an impersonation of *M. de Montaiglin* that would have been praiseworthy were it not for a very pedantic and affected pronunciation of the words. But for the faults on which we have insisted the piece and performance might pass muster. It is scarcely fair, however, to a writer of the reputation of M. Dumas to advance as his this invertebrate composition. Fortunately, perhaps, for the reputation of English art, Frenchmen, as a rule, know little of our language. Were matters otherwise, and were French dramatists aware of the manner in which their works are set before an English public, they would probably, instead of discussing the bases of an international copyright, seek for a total prohibition of the right of adaptation.

Sept. 11, 1875. So prosaic and commonplace are the ordinary conditions of existence in this country, that the constantly renewed effort of Mr. Boucicault to dignify Irish rebellion is probably as sensible a plan as is left to the dramatist who seeks to extract romantic interest from our contemporary politics. To the barrenness of the subject may, then, be ascribed the monotony of the dramas Mr. Boucicault has produced during recent years. No single deed of conspicuous heroism has come to light during successive stages of Irish revolt. By the dramatist who seeks to adhere to the facts of Irish rebellion there is but one picture to be presented. An Irish leader may be exhibited evading the pursuit of the police, hiding in caverns and among rocks, and seeking a means of escape by sea. His sole danger will be from traitors among his supposed adherents, and the most stirring incident to be expected will consist of the slaughter of some individual who is discovered to be a spy. Take a theme such as this, throw in a few specimens of Irish humour, and exhibit a few phases of Irish life, and a romantic drama is obtained. Such a piece Mr. Boucicault has given to the stage half-a-dozen times, and such he again produces in "*The Shaughraun*". Once only, out of the materials at his disposal, did he create a work of sustained interest. In "*Arrah-na-Pogue*" a pretty story of affection was interwoven with the intrigue of rebellion; thoroughly idyllic scenes of love-making were successfully introduced, and the whole production soared into the regions of art. Contented with this success, Mr. Boucicault has relaxed his efforts, and "*The Shaughraun*" is simply "*Arrah-na-Pogue*" turned inside out. Robert Ffolliott is Beamish M'Coul, Harvey Duff, the traitor, is Michael Feeny, Moya Dolan is an undeveloped Arrah Meelish, and Conn O'Kelly is Shaun the Post minus his official dignity. To the minor characters the similarity extends, and the jokes, the pictures exhibited, the scene of the action, and the character of the incidents, all share in

the resemblance. The one omission that has been made during the process of conversion is detrimental to the value. The love interest, if not entirely excised, is reduced to a minimum. In the development of the play, love passages are wholly subsidiary. This fact appears to have struck Mr. Boucicault, who at the last moment has arranged an abduction of two girls, which shall give an appearance of sentiment to the closing scenes. This effort is naturally a failure. After hunting on one track, and running to earth the prey, we resist the attempt to lure us on to another scent. Before the concluding scene is reached the plot is over, the hero has been pardoned, and has heard of the amnesty that has been pronounced, and all concern for him is at an end. No purpose is served by the abduction of Moya and Arte O'Neale, Mr. Boucicault's two heroines, and the spectator refuses to believe in the reality of their danger. What interest there is in the play centres in Conn, the Shaughraun, whatever that word may mean. A reckless scamp and vagabond, having no means of livelihood but fiddling at wake or fair, Conn compounds for all shortcomings by the possession of

That household virtue, most uncommon,
Of constancy.

As is often the case, no special merit can be found in the object of worship. Robert Ffolliott is a commonplace young gentleman, whose luck must have been especially bad to attract to him such an amount of attention from Government as shall secure him transportation. Transported, however, in defiance of law and custom, he is. To Australia Conn follows him, and as no gaols ever invented are able to keep the Shaughraun in—or out—an escape is arranged, and successfully conducted. To Ireland Ffolliott returns. As his arrival is at the opportune moment in which an amnesty is published, no especial risk would seem to be run. Two individuals have,

however, an interest in his ruin : Harvey Duff, a police spy, to whom his previous misfortunes are due, and Corry Kinchela, a false steward, who during his master's absence has taken possession of his estates. By the wiles of these men, Ffolliott is again embroiled with the police. He runs, accordingly, some wholly unnecessary dangers. After an opportunity has been offered for the presentation of scenes of Milesian revelry, including that most stimulating of all indulgences, a wake, the returned rebel is saved, chiefly through the heroism of his humble follower. Of his two enemies, one is shot by Conn, while the police spy jumps from a cliff to avoid the fury of a mob by which he is tracked.

Exactly to regulation is, accordingly, the drama. Its dialogue introduces Mr. Boucicault's best stage sentiment, so good that for most purposes it is better than real. Only now and then, where there has been carelessness, is the fact that it is gilding, and not gold, to be detected. In one case, when Ffolliott supposes Conn to be dead, he observes, "I should not like anything to befall Conn, for my own sake," a sufficiently temperate expression concerning one who had gone to the antipodes to deliver him from imprisonment. Blame can scarcely be imputed to Mr. Boucicault that the end, with its arrangement for a triple wedding, made in a den of smugglers, turns the whole into farce. An English public, it appears, will not be contented with the prospect of a wedding unless the preliminaries are settled in its presence. The introduction, by sheer force, of the wake of Conn is, however, a deliberate sacrifice of possibility to stage effect. On the whole, the garment Mr. Boucicault has turned is good enough for ordinary wear. It will serve its purpose, of filling Drury Lane Theatre and the pockets of author and manager. Against such a result little can be said, since the violation of art is not greater than in productions which are less successful. Much of the scenery is pic-

turesque. A scene of a revolving tower, which shows, from the inside first, and then from the outside, the escape of the hero, is more ingenious than commendable. The acting in two or three characters is admirable. Mr. Boucicault is probably the best stage Irishman that has been seen. It is impossible to make drollery more unctuous, and blarney more attractive, than they appear in his rendering. To the vitality he imparts to the character of Conn the success of the piece is largely attributable. Mrs. Boucicault, as *Moya*, also acts admirably, and Mr. Shiel Barry, as the *Police Spy*, gives a remarkable exhibition of fear almost tragic in its excess. A picture of abject degradation more true to life and more remarkable has seldom been seen. His leaps and bounds from one closed avenue of escape to another are absolutely startling in their grotesque terror. The "Shaughraun" was first produced at Wallack's Theatre, New York, on the 14th of November in last year.

ROCHEFOUCAULD, the most epigrammatic of French Sept. 18, 1875.
moralists, has said, "Les vieillards aiment à donner de bons préceptes, pour se consoler de n'être plus en état de donner de mauvais exemples," and Vauvenargues, one of the most thoughtful of the same fraternity, has declared that "Les conseils de la vieillesse éclairent sans échauffer, comme le soleil d'hiver". Modern French writers, with M. Dumas *fils* at their head, have changed the direction of the satire, and have commenced to depict youth as severe and occupied with worldly interests, and age as volatile and addicted to frivolous pleasures. This idea, first presented with frank gaiety to the world in the "Monsieur Jules" of MM. Lurine and Deslandes, a whimsicality produced at the Variétés, and a few days later more elaborately developed in "Un Père Prodigue,"

by M. Alexandre Dumas, has found its way on to the English stage in the "My Awful Dad" of Mr. Charles Mathews. From the famous comedy of M. Dumas Mr. Mathews has taken little except suggestions, the incidents he presents approaching more nearly those of "Monsieur Jules". No attempt is there to enforce the moral for which M. Dumas strenuously labours; no effort to do more than place in a ludicrous light the tribulations which a disreputable father brings upon the head of a cold-blooded and puritanical son. Coarse as is the workmanship and unpleasant as is the company to which the audience is introduced, the adaptation has some power to interest and amuse. Its situations, from a farcical standpoint, are ingenious, and the whole, with a large amount of indulgence, which, happily for the translator, the audience is disposed to accord, may be found diverting.

Adonis Evergreen lives in the chambers of his son Richard, a hardworking and formal barrister. His store of wild oats is inexhaustible, and at an age when most men are contemplating the garnered harvest of their follies, he is still engaged in sowing a new crop. Every variety of suffering is brought upon Richard, whose character is gravely compromised by his father's frivolities. In the end, after a not too edifying *tableau* of modern manners has been exhibited, the son finds a good character is less valuable than he thought. His father is able to carry off a young and rich widow, who loves him for his extravagancies rather than in spite of them, and from the reflected lustre of paternal excesses he is himself able to gain the hand of a maiden who has hitherto regarded him as spiritless. Without wishing to open any question of morality such as the production of "Un Père Prodigue" begot in Paris, we may ask whether a lesson of this kind is wholly satisfactory. It is, to say the least, a rather dangerous example to youth to point out that the cultivation of the

society of loose women is the best recommendation to the good graces of women of virtue. This, however, is the plain English of the teaching. Mr. Mathews will probably answer that the whole is farce. This is the true defence. The action passes in a world which is purely imaginary. All very well is it to speak of existing regions and to present characters as living in well-known localities. A world in which barristers receive lady clients, elderly gentlemen dress themselves up as Punch in order to go to masked balls, and sons make formal demands of marriage on behalf of their fathers, is, for English spectators at least, a domain of farce, and the actions of its denizens are not to be tried by any standard of sanity. It is not likely, indeed, that the follies of Adonis Evergreen will move much admiration or much inclination to copy them among the more staid of his admirers, and youth is not likely to find reproaches levelled against its over wisdom much more worthy of attention than the more commonplace censure to which it is in the habit of listening.

There is not much difficulty in playing a part of this description, and Mr. Mathews renders the character of the aged libertine with his well-known airiness of style. The highest praise and the strongest condemnation of the performance are, however, involved in the impression it generally conveyed. It is undoubtedly a remarkable feat for an actor of Mr. Mathews's age to perform. Art is, however, cruel as nature, and the moment a performance is remarkable rather than attractive her concern with it is over.

Golden lads and girls all must
As chimney-sweepers come to dust,

says Shakspeare. This is true of art as of nature, and when a performance reminds one only of past triumphs, art, whether the actor is called Mathews or Lemaître or

Déjazet, erects a tombstone over the living man. We can only say piously with Wordsworth :—

Let no rude hand deface it,
And its forlorn *hic jacet*.

Sept. 25, 1875. A NEW burlesque produced at the Strand Theatre is only interesting or worthy of comment for the illustration it affords of English methods of workmanship. "Gavaut, Minard et Cie" is a whimsical French piece of M. Gondinet, the idea of which is farcical, while its incidents are extravagant and impossible. The whole is, however, kept by the treatment within the limits of broad comedy. In this piece English ingenuity has seen a subject for burlesque. The two *bourgeois*, accordingly, whose doubts concerning the possible result of early indiscretions furnish the basis of the plot, are turned into two characters belonging to the impossible world of burlesque. One is dressed as a species of bird, his frills, the cut of his coat, and the general make up of his garments giving him some resemblance to a large rook, while the second is padded to an appearance of preposterous size. The action meanwhile proceeds as in the French piece, receiving what added comicality can be conveyed by the absurd gestures and ridiculous speech of the actors thus travestied. To other characters this method of treatment is extended. Three girls, the daughters of Gavaut, now rechristened Rumbo the Renowned, are dressed in short petticoats and silk tights and the ordinary appurtenances of actresses in burlesque, and a waiting-maid is supplied with a head-dress representing a coffee-pot, and a gown figured all over with emblems of domestic service. A clever and entertaining comedy is thus converted into a farce of the lowest and most degraded kind. Meanwhile the actions of the characters are consistent with the dress, and are wholly

meaningless and trivial. A lady, whose only characteristic is a strong taste for the romantic, joins in the breakdown with which an act concludes, and is supplied with a sweeping-brush, the possession of which is supposed to invest her with some species of humour. Inconceivably trivial and childish is the entire exhibition. So much to the taste of the public is it, however, that it was received at the first performance with positive rapture of applause. No single voice was raised in defence of common-sense or in resentment of the outrage upon stage art.

CHAPTER V.

Lyceum : " *Macbeth* ".—*Mirror* : " *Self*," a drama in four acts, by John Oxenford and Horace Wigan.—*Haymarket* : " *Married in Haste*," a comedy in four acts, by H. J. Byron.—*Prince of Wales's* : Revival of " *Masks and Faces*," by Charles Reade and Tom Taylor.—*Gaiety* : " *Henry VIII.*," played in three acts.—*Olympic* : " *Buckingham*," a drama in four acts, by W. G. Wills.—*Court* : " *Broken Hearts*," a fairy comedy in three acts, by W. S. Gilbert.

Oct. 2, 1875.

THE revival of " *Macbeth* " at the Lyceum Theatre is interesting in many respects. Never, since the Restoration, has the tragedy been presented with more regard to the intention of the author; and never have more exact study and more cultivated taste been applied to its adequate illustration. In place of the curious mosaic to which the stage is used, we have the words of Shakspeare; the music which Lock or some one else wrote for Davenant's verses is thrust into its proper place, in the *entr'actes*; and readings which are authoritative are given in place of those which are popular or effective. A vindication of this method of treatment, the only treatment defensible in the case of Shakspeare, could scarcely be desired more complete than was in the present instance afforded. Not only was no sense of loss begotten by the absence of the familiar appanages, but the scenes, now first divested of extraneous matter, produced for the first time their full effect. From the moment when, in the opening scene, the witches were

revealed by flashes of lightning to that wherein they executed, in their final appearance, that "antic round" to cheer the "sprites" of Macbeth which all editions concur in giving, the scenes remained impressive. A less liberal employment of fireworks in the brewing of the magic "gruel" is the only improvement that can be suggested. The scenery illustrated the action without overpowering it, and the costumes, from the highest to the lowest, were at once artistic and full of character. One or two innovations in the text, that are ventured upon, are defensible enough. The most important is, we believe, American in origin. In the case of the opening lines of the well-known soliloquy of Macbeth, Mr. Irving placed a period at the end of the first line, and removed the colon after the word "quickly" in the second. The lines run, accordingly, thus :—

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well,
It were done quickly if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success.

This reading, against which nothing can be advanced except that it is scarcely required, was warmly urged by the anonymous author of an able essay on this soliloquy of Macbeth, which saw the light in the *Boston Courier*. It is, however, we are told, not unfamiliar on the English stage. In the same soliloquy occurs the one noteworthy instance in which the text of recognised editions is forsaken. After the words,

I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on the other,

Mr. Irving pardonably introduces, according to the suggestion of Hanmer, the word "side". This addition has at least the merit of rendering the image intelligible to the

general public without departing very widely from any possible intention of the author. The substitution of the word "would" for "should" in the line spoken by Macbeth on hearing of the death of his wife,

She should have died hereafter,

we assume to be due to a trip of the tongue.

In the case of the general interpretation there is less to admire. Single figures stand forth with some distinctness, and more than one presentation has character as well as clearness of outline. The central figure is not, however, Macbeth, at least not the Macbeth to which we are accustomed. Criticism, with its usual acumen, has succeeded in framing various and contradictory theories as to the character of Macbeth. Enough, however, remains evident, in spite of literary pother, to declare that Shakspeare, in *Macbeth*, intended to depict villainy splendid and martial, not cowardly and abject. How far Shakspeare was acquainted with existing models of tragedy it is, of course, impossible to say. It is difficult to believe him remaining, during a lifetime devoted to the drama, ignorant of the supreme development his art had received. This much, at least, is certain, "the most sublime and impressive drama which the world has ever beheld," as Hallam describes "*Macbeth*," approaches most closely of all the works of its epoch the spirit of Greek tragedy. From the moment when Macbeth meets the witches and listens to their evil augurings he passes under the hand of fate. Such questioning as to the limits of fate and free-will may, of course, be once more evoked, as Milton has denounced, as

Vain wisdom all and false philosophy.

Not forthwith does Macbeth act upon the words of the weird sisters. As a guarantee of their truth comes the first promised addition to his honours. He is greeted as

Thane of Cawdor. As though to tempt him to further steps, Duncan places himself in his power. Here, when his moral nature, disturbed as yet, and not defiled, would probably shrink, his wife comes forward and takes on herself the deed. After yielding to her counsels, and purchasing, at the cost of all joy, the promised distinction, Macbeth treads out alone the remainder of his career. She is by him to cheer him and to save him from the result of his indiscretions, but she no longer supplies the inducement to crime, and is not even made directly acquainted with his purposes. Sooner than he, she finds the weariness of their lot, and she dies of heart-break, while he is still fighting as a man. From the moment when Duncan's assassination is accomplished, the spirit of murder reigns in the heart of Macbeth—"Guilt is his grim chamberlain". Powerless to resist the swelling influences, he abandons himself wearily to the inevitable, declaring—

I am in blood
Stepp'd in so far that should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.

So subjugated is he, that he finds in his very regrets an argument for the commission of further crimes. His pathetic speech, "Duncan is in his grave," is delivered while he is comforting himself with the thought of the pre-arranged murder of Banquo, and the ghost of Banquo has barely disappeared before he has shaped in his mind the death of Macduff. Dismissing all thought of the ethical lesson enforced, we see in the play a marvellous study of the growth and development of evil, and watch in the man the poor fight which moral restraints and "compunctuous visitings" can make against the dominancy of evil. When support is wanting, Macbeth finds it by having fresh recourse to the witches, whose fateful presence or influence directs his every movement and dominates the entire action. Neither this nor any accepted view of the charac-

ter of Macbeth does Mr. Irving present. In its place, he shows us an abject and unheroical being, in whom we find no trace of the soldier. His mourning and complaining are less than manly, and his mental struggles are those of a commonplace nature. There is no warrant in the text for the excess of cowardice Mr. Irving displays. Macbeth's language in presence of the ghost of Banquo exhibits as much anger as fear. It is throughout that of a soldier ashamed of the tremors which he cannot command. In the very whirlwind of his fear he couples with words of defiance his protests against the unexpected species of torture to which he is exposed. To abandon this view is to lose sight of the character. Quite useless is it to show the instances in which Mr. Irving over-accentuates the cowardice of Macbeth. From the moment when he commences the soliloquy to which previous reference has been made (act i. sc. 7), pressing his hands to his head, after a manner indicative of mental perplexity, to that when he abandons all hope and fights recklessly for life, his sole remaining stake, there is not a point at which the character is adequately masculine. Certain passages were effective, notably the exit speech, "Wake Duncan with thy knocking," etc. Not, however, until the scenes of fighting was any durable effect produced upon the audience. In the last act Mr. Irving presented striking pictures, and the reckless bravery with which he fought against the united powers of earth and hell was impressive. His concluding fight with Macduff was absolute desperation.

In Mr. Irving's conception there is intention, but it is wrong; and there are individual merits which will not compound for systematic error. This objection might, however, be vanquished in another part—might even be removed by further study and practice. Mr. Irving must learn, however, that his mannerisms have developed into evils so formidable they will, if not checked,

end by impeding his career. His slow pronunciation and his indescribable elongation of syllables bring the whole occasionally near burlesque. Mr. Irving has youth, intelligence, ambition, zeal, and resolution. These things are sacrificed to vices of style, which have strengthened with the actor's success, and, like all weeds of ill growth, have obtained excessive development. It is impossible to preserve the music of Shakspeare if words of one syllable are to be stretched out to the length of five or six. Mr. Irving's future depends greatly on his mastery of this defect.

Miss Bateman's *Lady Macbeth*, although monotonous, was powerful. Due prominence was given to the weariness of defeat, which in her case follows closely on the murder. Other *rôles* were rendered with tolerable spirit, though no character calls for especial comment.

In a representation so intelligent as that of "Macbeth" it is regrettable to see one error maintained. When Macbeth is questioned by Macduff and others why he killed the sleeping grooms, the demand should be made simply and without the violent menace now accompanying it, upon which none, under such circumstances, would have ventured. "Wherefore did you so?" asks Macduff, with some interest, but without the thought of a menace, for which the season was most inopportune. The following speech of Macbeth shows clearly that no such anger as is evinced in the representation had been perceived by him.

How servile is the dependence of the English stage upon the foreign drama is shown in the fact that when French successes are not to be obtained our managers fall back upon failures in preference to seeking a source of home supply. "Les Diables Noirs," of M. Sardou, the most universally condemned of modern dramatic produc-

tions, a piece concerning which the “censure,” the critics, and the public were of a mind, and for which all the genius of Berton and Madame Fargueil could not win acceptance, has thus been twice set before an English public. Each time the result has been failure. “Passion,” a version by Mr. Roberts, played by Mdlle. Beatrice in this country, was speedily withdrawn, and “Self,” by Messrs. Oxenford and Horace Wigan, produced on Monday at the Mirror, was received with derision. A more hopeless piece has, indeed, seldom taxed the ingenuity of the adaptor. A lachrymose and wildly improbable love story, with a tragic termination, is blended with some scenes of extravagant farce. . The whole composition resembles thus nothing so much as an attempt to burlesque the worst eccentricities of the romantic school of drama. A man without one spark of honour or nobility, like the infamous hero of the scarce-mentionable novel of Choderlos de Laclos, seeks the love of the purest women for the mere purpose of exposing, betraying, and insulting them. After passing through various stages of degradation, down to the commission of absolute theft, he is locked in her chamber by his wife, who loves him, and who, having closed all means of exit, has set fire to the house. From this peril he is delivered only to die of some strange species of remorse wrought in him by the death of his wife. Our readers may perhaps view with amusement a few criticisms provoked by this piece in the year (1863) of its production: “Jamais drame plus dangereux n'a effronté le public. Il a tout contre lui, la convenance, la vraisemblance, une intrigue chimérique, des caractères outrés, des passions qui tiennent du délire. Son principal personnage est antipathique de la tête aux pieds : il fait un métier plus honteux que la honte.” So speaks one authority. A second declares: “Je ne crois pas qu'on ait jamais poussé plus loin que dans ces quatre actes l'horreur de l'idéal et le goût de l'odieux, le mépris de l'art

et l'amour du mécanisme, le dédain du public, et la confiance en soi-même". A third declares it "Indigne d'être montré au public," and a fourth pronounces it "Tour à tour ennuyeux, infernal et lugubre". Miss Rose Coghlan played with force, and was supported with more or less energy by Miss Caroline Hill, Mr. Clayton, and Mr. Wigan. The principal character, however, was allotted to Mr. Allerton, an actor who succeeded speedily in moving the derision of the audience, the result being disaster, scarcely short of collapse.

MR. BYRON'S comedies are like fruit trees growing on Oct. 9, 1875. espaliers. The slightest possible amount of fabric serves to support the utmost obtainable quantity of product. Not very valuable is perhaps the crop, concerning which Mr. Bryon is anxious; its abundance is, however, beyond question. A thick foliage of speech hides the branches and their frail support, and red-cheeked apples of wit gleam through the leafy screen. Dismissing an illustration which is capable of being carried further, we may say of Mr. Byron's latest production that, while it displays every fault and weakness to which its author is prone, it is in advance of some work he has recently produced. When first heard, indeed, it leaves the impression of being a clever and almost a good play. Reflection is required before we perceive that the story is artificial and improbable as well as flimsy, that the dialogue when most amusing is forced, and that the characters, though sketched with intention, are incomplete and inconsistent.

Plot is a matter with which Mr. Byron rarely concerns himself. What he has supplied in "Married in Haste" has at least the merit of shapeliness. If it is urged against it that a single word might at any moment upset it, the same may be said concerning the most ingenious comedies of

Scribe and M. Sardou, and might, indeed, be advanced against "Othello".

A young man, depending wholly upon an allowance from his uncle, marries without consulting that relative, and finds himself shortly afterwards reduced to penury. Having a slight knowledge of art, he tries vainly to earn as a painter a livelihood for himself and his wife. Poverty exercises a baneful influence upon his character. He becomes neglectful of his wife, and succeeds in arousing her jealousy to such an extent that she quits his roof and returns to her father. A general reconciliation is reserved for a last act.

Within the lines of so familiar and commonplace a plot a good deal of originality is included. The padding is, indeed, more important than the figure. A scene, in which the husband learns of his wife's flight from overhearing a letter that has been written to tell him of it, and that the writer, believing himself alone, reads aloud, is novel and ingenious. Other scenes are telling, and the story in its progress obtains a firm hold upon the audience. The dialogue, meanwhile, bristles with jokes, many of which are admirably effective. It is doubtful, indeed, whether the sternest critic could condemn Mr. Byron, after watching the effect of his play upon the spectators. A smile of amusement remains during the progress of the piece upon every face, and is only discarded in favour of the broad grin of extravagant hilarity produced by some joke fired off in or out of season. So telling proved these verbal pleasantries of Mr. Byron that a second and even a third peal of laughter attested the delight of the public; while those in remote parts of the house, unable always to catch the point that provoked such demonstrations, grew impatient and even angry, demanding vociferously not to be shut out from the feast for which they had paid.

Of these jokes many, the majority even, were forced; while others came both naturally and spontaneously. To

Mr. Byron, however, the manner in which a joke is introduced is a matter of indifference. Thus, in the piece before us, one of the characters, for no purpose except to introduce some sketches of sailor life, gives an account of a visit to the Three Mariners, the principal public-house of a fishing village. Nothing whatever had this visit to do with the play, yet who that heard the description of the potations of the men able to imbibe, as the speaker explained, any *given* quantity, and their difficulties with the police earning them the *sobriquets* of the leaky boats, they had to be so constantly bailed out, could quarrel with the interpolation?

The characters introducing such familiar types as the retired manufacturer and his wife, seeking vainly to be received into society, were not true to themselves, and changed to suit the varying action. With all these faults on its head, "Married in Haste" is a clever and amusing play.

It introduced some good acting. Mr. Vezin rendered admirably the character of a rich old *virtuoso*, and, in one or two earnest scenes, displayed much force and passion. Miss Carlotta Addison as the heroine made a stride in her profession. So concentrated and intense was the manner in which she displayed feeling without going outside the bounds of social custom, a high position may be predicted for her as an exponent of realistic drama. Mr. Byron supported easily the part of a cynical man about town, whose specialty it is on all occasions to couple the crabbedest spirit with the most generous actions. Mr. Howe enacted the retired manufacturer.

AMONG the plays dealing with theatrical life and characters, of which the present century has seen abundance both in France and England, the "Masks and Faces" of Messrs.

Tom Taylor and Charles Reade stands prominent. It has an interesting and a sympathetic plot, progressive action, and distinct characterisation. Its dialogue is scholarly and effective, and its reproductions of past scenes and characters have more truth than is customary in similar efforts. At its first performance it obtained a fair but not excessive amount of popularity, to which the acting, in the principal parts, of Mrs. Stirling, Miss Reynolds, Mr. B. Webster, and Mr. Leigh Murray contributed. This work, in part re-shapen by the authors, has now been produced at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, the management of which, since the death of Mr. Robertson, has cast about in all directions for pieces as well suited to the capacity of its company and the tastes of its patrons as the realistic comedies in which its fortunes were established. The alterations that have been made have reference principally to the time in which the action is supposed to pass, and in nowise affect the motive of the plot. As now arranged, the story is evolved in three scenes, each extending over an entire act.

The performance now given has a respectable amount of *ensemble*. Its chief recommendation lies, however, in the merit of single characters, two or three of which are excellently acted. Since her abandonment of her former walk of burlesque, and her assumption of *rôles* belonging to genuine comedy, Mrs. Bancroft has never failed to cast new light on a character in which she has appeared. Her *Peg Woffington* differs from that of Mrs. Stirling in more than one important respect. With Mrs. Stirling the triumph of goodness, which raised the actress to the capacity for complete self-abnegation, seemed due to a rich and ripe nature, and to an overflow of animal spirits. With the latter exponent, it springs from a succession of impulses. To accomplish the sacrifice costs more in the later interpretation than in the earlier. Something in the bright being Mrs. Stirling presented seemed antagonistic

to sorrow. With Mrs. Bancroft, impulses bad and good follow each other in wave-like succession. Luckily, the seventh is always a wave of mercy, and goodness triumphs. Very noteworthy is Mrs. Bancroft's petulance. More than once she seems on the point of flinging up in disgust a *rôle* of good angel, which she is surprised to find thus thrust upon her. Mr. Coghlan wears the dress of the past century with distinction of manner, and is admirable in *Sir Charles Pomander*. Mr. Coghlan seems of late to have mistaken his vocation. Something stronger than mere sentimental interest is required to force his talents into play. The duty of Miss Terry as *Mabel Vane* scarcely extends beyond wearing tastefully the artistic dresses provided. She goes farther, however, and, by an admirable display of tenderness and trust, assigns the part an importance it has not previously received. This innovation was highly palatable to the audience, which greeted the impersonation with such cheers as the *rôle* has not previously elicited. Mr. Bancroft was scarcely well fitted in the *rôle* of *Triplet*. The notion of the decayed gentleman was adequately conveyed, and some of the scenes, notably that in which his fingers were seen itching to pocket for his starving little ones the dainties set before him at the house of Vane, were new and touching. His attitudes were stiff, however, and the realisation of the character was not sustained nor equal to the conception revealed everywhere through it. In the remainder of the characters there was nothing to call for notice, except the subordination of individuals to the general weal. Mr. A. Wood failed to give *Colley Cibber* the requisite amount of breeding, Mr. Archer as *Ernest Vane* was heavy, and Mr. Teesdale's *Quin* deprived the famous actor of the claims to intelligence and breeding which *Quin*, in spite of his want of popularity, undoubtedly possessed. *Snarl* and *Soaper*, the two critics, who play into each other's hands, after the fashion of *Cordatus* and *Mitis*, their two predecessors, in

DRAMATIC CRITICISM.

Ben Jonson's "Every Man out of his Humour," were fairly interpreted, though the snarling of Mr. Dewar might, with no great difficulty, have been taken for chuckling.

Nov. 27, 1875. IN more than one respect the system of morning performances at the theatre, now springing into vogue, seems like a return to former traditions of the stage. The hours are not far different from those at the Bankside or the Globe, when the only means of lighting the auditorium was through the open roof, and when the audiences consisted of those to whom choice or necessity had given a holiday. The company with which a piece is performed may be indefinitely strengthened, since a manager is able to recruit from the *troupes* of most of his rivals. It is not surprising, accordingly, that these representations are followed with growing interest, and are rapidly rising in public estimation. Such occasions seem especially suited to the production of our early drama. No manager has a company adequate to the performance of Shakspeare. At morning entertainments, however, he may hope to present any tragic or comic masterpiece with a cast which, if not adequate, is, at least, as good as the resources of the modern stage can afford. Morning representations may thus, with care and intelligence in the direction, become a substitute for that educational theatre lovers of the stage are constantly seeking to obtain.

No special interest attaches to the performance of "Henry VIII." at the Gaiety. The company is hastily fitted to the parts, and the entire representation is wanting, not only in that rare gift of *ensemble*, but in the more easily obtainable quality of picturesqueness. With the exception of one part superbly played, and one or two others which are respectably supported, the performance is unintelligent and of small account.

It is now no longer heresy to say that "Henry VIII." from most points of view is a poor play. The theory recently advanced, that Fletcher had a hand in it, is easily defensible, and it would not be difficult to sustain the thesis that his was the lion's share. Few who know the versification of Shakspeare will admit that he could have written, towards the close of his career, such lines as—

What though I know her virtuous
And well-deserving? yet I know her *for*
A spleeny Lutheran; and not wholesome *to*
Our cause, that she should lie i' the bosom *of*
Our hard-ruled King. Again, there is sprung *up*
An heretic, an arch-one, etc.

Every speech of Queen Katharine and most speeches of Wolsey show such signs of Fletcher's special style of versification that it is only possible to deny that dramatist a hand in the play on the supposition that Shakspeare for once imitated the method of his associate. A close study of Shakspeare will, we think, leave in the minds of competent judges no more doubt that he is not wholly responsible for "Henry VIII." than that he is partially responsible for the "Two Noble Kinsmen".

By reducing the play into three acts, and closing it with the defeat of Wolsey, the Gaiety management has got rid of the spectacular element, which in past times has been its chief recommendation to the multitude. A more important sacrifice is that of the heroine. Queen Katharine, who in the original forms the central figure, now shrinks into insignificance, her place being taken by Wolsey. A monopoly of interest attends the "great Lord Cardinal," neither the irascible outbreaks of Henry, the insolence of the courtier nobles, nor the complaints of Buckingham being sufficiently long to distract attention from him. Never fortunate or successful in the presentation of passion or heroic resolve, Mr. Phelps shows himself

an admirable actor the moment the internal workings of a nature compounded of qualities noble and sordid have to be depicted. His presentation of Wolsey is perfect. We see the proud and scheming statesman more than a match for the turbulent nobles around him, consumed with an intolerable and a restless ambition, and watch the cynical courtesy with which he half covers his daring hopes and designs. The manner in which the different phases of character are expressed is admirable alike in breadth of effect and moderation of style, and affords an absolute lesson in art to those who will study it. When, in answer to Surrey's brutal threat :—

I'll startle you
Worse than the sacring bell when the brown wench
Lay kissing in your arms, lord cardinal,—

he responds—

How much, methinks, I could despise this man,
But that I am bound in charity against it,—

Mr. Phelps' delivery of these lines was admirable in its expression of superb scorn, and its combination of courtesy with contempt. The whole performance is excellent, and shows that the range of Mr. Phelps extends beyond those comic characters by which it has been supposed to be limited. None of the other characters calls for notice. Mr. Clayton could not satisfactorily evolve a conception he had formed of *Henry*. Mr. Harcourt obtained a round of applause for the dying speech of *Buckingham*. This was, however, only a piece of studied declamation. It is but just to the actor to say that there is room for little more.

As proofs how unintelligent is the arrangement, it is sufficient to say that when the court nobles should be confabulating in a corner about the expected fall of the Cardinal they stand and declaim ; and that when *Henry*

is to be recognised by Wolsey among the maskers he alone wears a mask, and the remaining members of the dance are represented by women. We shall never get respectable performances of Shakspeare until absurd traditions regarding such points are wholly dismissed. Much of the stage business is execrable. Mr. Phelps even sins in this respect. Quite unpardonable is the manner in which Cardinal Wolsey drives back the papal legate, and takes precedence of him.

MR. WILLS'S drama of "Buckingham," produced at Dec. 4, 1875. the Olympic, is a finer and more vigorous work than his "Charles the First," to which it is intended as a sequel. That it is less effective upon the stage is ascribable in part to the fact that the pruning-knife has been less sparingly applied. A more serious drawback from its chance of permanent popularity is, however, afforded by a representation inadequate throughout. Of the half-dozen important characters supplied by the dramatist, not one meets with satisfactory interpretation. It is possible that a portion of the blame of failure rests upon the author. An actor so painstaking and competent as Mr. Neville is not likely entirely to misread a rôle put into his hand. Mr. Wills has sought, however, in the character of Buckingham, to reconcile qualities that do not easily amalgamate. He has made him at once the type of the most careless and foolhardy of Cavaliers, and the model of a patriotic and high-souled gentleman. It is needless to dwell upon the true character of this most dissipated of noblemen, the lover of "wanton Shrewsbury," the slayer of her husband, the head of "the Cabal," and the man at whom Pepys levels an accusation of dishonest dealing at cards. Such a character is capable of rehabilitation, and the dramatist has a full right to place it in

what light he chooses. While showing Buckingham as "that life of pleasure and that soul of whim," he has given him a firmness of purpose and a steadfastness of effort irreconcilable with such qualities. On this graver side Mr. Neville has leaned, the result being that the Duke's madcap actions are incomprehensible, and one of them at least is dramatically unacceptable and incredible. A sentimental interest is obtained by presenting Buckingham as constant in his love for the daughter of Fairfax, whom he espoused. It is dearly purchased, however, when the true lover and the devoted adherent, the type of cavalier honour, and the framer of a tremendous indictment against Cromwell, is shown throwing away his life in pure wantonness, and in the very presence of the woman he adores. If the play is to hold a permanent place upon the stage, one of two things must be done—the sentimental side of Buckingham must be thrown into the shade; or the second act, in which he sports with all he ought to hold sacred, must be modified. As acted, Buckingham is more like Clancarty than the Zimri of Dryden's inimitable satire.

Of the four acts of the play, the first shows Buckingham surprised by Cromwell in his house in Yorkshire—the same, it may be supposed, from which subsequently he rode to his death. On the watch for a more important capture, Cromwell compels the servants of the house to hide from their master, who has but now reached it, that his Ironsides are quartered in every unoccupied room and lobby, and even behind the arras of the room in which the action passes. In a cleverly arranged scene between himself and Mary Fairfax, Buckingham learns the truth, and he succeeds, in spite of all obstacles, in giving a warning to Charles the Second, who is already in sight of the house. The sentence of immediate death at first pronounced is commuted for one of exile, when Fairfax claims the life of the Duke as that of his accepted son-in-law. In the second act Buckingham braves all perils, and in

defiance of the price set upon his head, returns to London travestied as a mountebank. In pure bravado he throws off his disguise, and drinks in the market-place a health to King Charles. In the third act, to save his life, he consents to marry forthwith Elizabeth, the favourite daughter of Cromwell. By an arrangement to which Elizabeth, in spite of her love for him, or perhaps even moved by it, since no other means will keep his head from the scaffold, consents, the place of the bride is taken by Mary Fairfax. Foiled once more, Cromwell determines on a slower revenge than that he previously meditated. Seeing his daughter after her self-sacrifice swooning, and knowing how deeply her affections must be injured, he pronounces the doom :—

So may God do to me if I requite not
 This business in full measure to thy bosom.
 This is thy sentence: while she pines and withers,
 Thou, too, shalt pine and rot in deepest dungeon;
 Those golden locks shall grizzle; that straight back
 Shall bend with care; be it for months or years,
 As she shall droop so shalt thou droop and wither!
 If she should die—that day she dies for love
 Thou diest for treason! (To guards) Seize him—to the Tower!

Buckingham's answer is a burst of impassioned eloquence, which connects the play with its predecessor :—

I do not plead with thee against this sentence;
 But, tyrant, trust me, thou shalt share it too—
 I do condemn thee also to a dungeon—
 Tremble by day—thy palace is a dungeon
 Whose gaoler, Fear, shall keep the golden key,
 And people every shadow with assassins!
 Tremble by night—thy chamber is a dungeon;
 The winds shall hiss at thee their shrill indictment;
 The rain shall seem to thee a nation's tears;
 The household fire, which cheers the innocent,

Shall take the semblance of red autographs,
Signing the hideous death-warrant again !
Thy murdered master's melancholy eye
Shall open on thy dreams with mute reproach ;
Bitter remorse shall ravin on thy heart,
And mocking fiends say amen to thy prayers !
Waste *thou* and pine until we meet again.

To this sufficiently masculine and vigorous curse, Cromwell answers impetuously :—

Gag him, or strike him dead—away with him !

In the last act Elizabeth Cromwell is dead, and Cromwell, moved by her dying intercession, delays to sign the death-warrant. He does so at last, but expires before it is carried into effect. The pardon of Richard Cromwell has already been secured, and Buckingham is restored to freedom and honours.

Whatever opinion may be held concerning the liberties taken with history, a powerful if unequal play has undoubtedly been produced. Neither Buckingham nor Cromwell was sympathetic to the house, and as the two heroines were weakly sustained, scenes that had intrinsic strength failed in their effect. A play thus which has capacity to stir an audience obtained that unsatisfactory award, a *succès d'estime*. The force of some scenes triumphed over all difficulties, and at more than one point warm outbursts were provoked. The intervals between these seemed long, however, and the gathered heat was allowed to disperse. A more competent interpretation, especially of the female characters, would have done something to obviate this result. If the play fail to make its mark, it will afford proof how good dramatic workmanship may miscarry, and how strange combination of gifts and chances go to a dramatic triumph.

THAT Mr. Gilbert should have found fairy stories a Dec 18, 1875. convenient vehicle for satire is easily conceived. One of the simplest and most customary means of ridiculing human institutions is to test their effect upon unsophisticated natures. Fairy machinery lends itself readily to such a purpose. In a world in which nothing can be pronounced impossible or illogical, since the law of sequence is abrogated, the wildest experiments are permissible. In his fairy dramas, accordingly, Mr. Gilbert has done elaborately what, with machinery much less complicated, was accomplished by Voltaire in more than one of his tales, and notably in his "*L'Ingénue*". Galatea—who from a statue is converted into a woman, and who, in a candid and ingenuous search after truth, finds nothing around her but deceit, insincerity, and sham—is a feminine counterpart to the Huron of Voltaire. Gradually, however, in his employment of these means, Mr. Gilbert has laid upon them a heavier duty. At first the satirical purpose was sufficient. The comic complications of "*The Wicked World*" sought only to provoke laughter. In "*Pygmalion and Galatea*" the author blended sadness with mirth, and, by a humanising touch, presented his heroine as sickened with the follies and frivolities around her, and seeking again the repose of marble, from which she had been roused. From this position to that he now assumes is a short and easy step. After presenting a being weary of the torments of love, and invoking oblivion, it is natural to depict one to whom the torments themselves shall prove fatal. In three pieces, however, Mr. Gilbert has presented himself in as many different lights. In "*The Wicked World*" he is a satirist, in "*Pygmalion and Galatea*" he is a humorist, and in "*Broken Hearts*," given at the Court Theatre, he is a poet. The three plays together form the most important contribution to fairy literature that has been supplied by any dramatist, or, indeed, any writer, since the commencement of the seventeenth century.

Allusions to fairies in the two shapes in which they are most commonly presented, as beings akin to the nymphs of classic legends and the *fate* of Italian romance, or as the

— demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green-sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites—

are common in early literature, and such are contained in more than one of our early plays. It was reserved, however, for the time of Queen Elizabeth and her Stuart successors to see an epic poem, half-a-dozen plays, and lyrics innumerable written in their honour. A curious and interesting branch of study is offered by the part the elves play in literature. In the poems of Jonson, Browne, Herrick, Mennis, the Duchess of Newcastle, and Drayton we see diminutive creatures whose interference in human affairs is capricious, often benevolent, and at worst mischievous. In Spenser's great poem, and in the allusions to fairy damsels in "Paradise Regained," these beings are the nymphs of romance. Shakspeare, in the "Midsummer Night's Dream," presents the fairies as diminutive, but makes Titania fall in love with Bottom, which she could scarcely have done had she been like Queen Mab, a rival potentate,—

In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
On the forefinger of an alderman.

A possible supposition, if such matters are to be discussed, is that fairies were capable of changing their size, an idea that seems suggested by Shakspeare himself. In "The Goblins" of Sir John Suckling, and in the "Amyntas" of Thomas Randolph, as in "The Merry Wives of Windsor," the supposed fairies are only human beings masquerading. Fairy influences prevail in many plays of the Elizabethan epoch, as in "The Tempest," "The Faithful Shepherdess" of Beaumont and Fletcher, and, in a slight degree, in "The Sad Shepherd" of Ben

Jonson. "Oberon's Triumph," by Ben Jonson, blends curiously Gothic and classical mythologies. In dealing with a subject on which little is known, and to which it is scarcely probable we shall revert, it is worth while to refer to one or two subsequent works belonging to this category. Of more recent plays of this class, "Edgar and Emeline," attributed to Dr. Hawkesworth, and produced at Drury Lane, is the most noteworthy, since it was more than once revived, and on one occasion Mrs. Siddons played the heroine. Its plot is agreeable, and some of the fairy verses are not without music. "Fairy Favour," by Thomas Hull, "The Fairy Prince," by George Colman, and other pieces of the kind, are adaptations from Shakespeare or Ben Jonson. A play called "The Fairy Queen" was among those destroyed by Warburton's cook. Since then fairies have rarely appeared, except in burlesque and pantomime. Mr. Albery's "Oriana," an ingenious and not too successful work, catching something of the spirit of Beaumont and Fletcher, deserves mention.

Mr. Gilbert's plays are only so far concerned with the fairies that his scene is Fairy Land. Thoroughly human are, with few exceptions, all his characters; and it is only by being subject to the operations of charms and talismans they are distinguishable from ordinary mortals. In his "Pygmalion and Galatea," his heroine seemed to ask, in the words of the chorus in "Atalanta in Calydon":—

Was there not evil enough,
Mother, and anguish on earth
Born with a man at his birth,
* * * * *
That thou must lay on him love?

The lesson in "Broken Hearts" is in part the same, since Love is the destroyer. It shows, however, the vanity of resistance against his might, and so recalls the lovely song in "Valentinian":—

Hear ye ladies that despise
What the mighty love has done ;
Fear examples and be wise—
Fair Calisto was a nun ;
Leda, sailing on a stream
To deceive the hopes of man,
Love accounting but a dream,
Doted on a silver swan ;
Danaë, in a brazen tower,
Where no love was, loved a shower.

Having, as she believes, lost her lover, Prince Florian of Spain, who is supposed to have been drowned, the Lady Hilda, with four maidens, victims of similar calamity, and with a young sister, the Lady Vavir, a stranger yet to love, seeks a summer island which is a portion of the out-lying domains of Fairy Land. Here, even, though no mortal except Mousa, a deformed dwarf, approaches them, they are not quite safe. As man there is none to cherish, one takes for lover a sun-dial, a second a fountain, and a third, moved by an instinct more appreciably feminine, her glass. To this bower comes Prince Florian the Knight, whose rumoured death has driven Hilda into seclusion. Possessor of a magic scarf, of a virtue like that assigned by Madame de Girardin to the famous Canne de M. de Balzac, of rendering its wearer invisible, Florian amuses himself by answering the loving words addressed by the maidens to the objects of their preference. With one of these, Hilda, he is much impressed. Being happy enough to overhear her confession of affection for him, admiration at once ripens into love. While waiting an opportunity to avow himself, he is deprived of the talisman by Mousa, who, having long loved Hilda, employs it as a means to woo her unseen. Personating a fountain, Mousa speeds so well in his courtship, he induces the maiden to go through a form of betrothal. Her horror at discovering in the man to whom she is affianced her own misshapen servant is, of course, intense. By stratagem she gains

from him the scarf, and then, with bitter derision, bids him profit by a bride he shall never see again. The difficulty thus raised is in the end conquered. Before the lovers are made happy Vavir has to die—“*On ne badine pas avec l'amour!*” From the words carelessly addressed to her by Florian, Vavir has drawn a passionate love, the defeat of which means death. Mainly by gentle stratagems Hilda and Florian strive to comfort her. She is like the little western flower on which the bolt of Cupid fell—

Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound.

Her death is painless, however, and her last adieux to the lovers are coupled with words of affection.

So ends a play which, though weak in parts, is tender, touching, and poetical. Many of the speeches are happy in language as well as dramatic, and the entire action is supremely moving. Faults of detail are observable in minor matters. Mouston's surrender of his schemes of vengeance, upon the delivery by Florian of some words not too noteworthy for kindness, is an instance of the species of gratitude that Shylock repudiated in his dealing with Antonio :—

Fair sir, you spat on me on Wednesday last,
You spurn'd me such a day; another time
You call'd me dog, and for these courtesies
I'll lend you thus much moneys.

The character of *Vavir* needs very delicate treatment, and with a less admirable interpretation would probably have proved mawkish. Miss Hollingshead imparted to it, however, a purity and delicacy such as have seldom been seen on the stage. To this supreme purity, indeed, the success of the whole was principally ascribable. Mrs. Kendal, as *Hilda*, was once or twice declamatory, and at the close, by a scream as out of place as would be a clang of cymbals at the termination of Mendelssohn's overture to

the "Midsummer Night's Dream," almost ruined the play. The piece does not call for realistic interpretation. It is probable enough a woman would scream on finding her sister dead. The motive, however, in this case is different, the piece being intended to end in a *pianissimo*. After implanting two kisses on the pallid lips, the sound of which was quite audible in the breathless silence of the house, Mrs. Kendal should have thrown herself into her lover's arms. In her general rendering Mrs. Kendal was excellent. Mr. Kendal was gallant as the Prince, and Mr. Anson effective as the dwarf. It is creditable to English audiences that a piece of this character should obtain a warmly favourable verdict.

CHAPTER VI.

Haymarket : “*Romeo and Juliet*”.—*Duke’s* : “*Too True*,”
a drama in three acts, by H. T. Craven.—*Haymarket* :
“*As You Like It*”.—*Haymarket* : “*Anne Boleyn*,” a
drama in five acts, by Tom Taylor.—*Lyceum* :
“*Othello*”.—*Olympic* : “*The Gascon*,” a drama in five
acts, by W. Muskerry.—*Globe* : “*Jo*,” a drama in three
acts, by J. P. Burnett.

MISS NEILSON’s *Juliet* has undergone little modification. In the early scenes it is still noteworthy for girlish gaiety and light-heartedness, through which a passionate temperament is revealed; at the close, it rises to tragic intensity in late years not often rivalled. But for a slight suspicion of over-sweetness in one or two passages, especially in the cajolery of the Nurse, always overdone on the modern stage, the character of Juliet, as she stands in the flush of amorous maidenhood, is fully realised. It should be remembered that Juliet belongs to the noblest blood of Italy, and her youthful tenderness to her Nurse should show some measure of such reserve as the knowledge of rank seldom fails to breed. In the scene in which the Friar suggests to Juliet the means of escape from the dreaded marriage with Paris, the face of the actress is a study. Doubt, misgiving, and affright chase each other across it, until the mention of Romeo and the glad thought that he will be ready to clasp her to his bosom overcome all shadow of scruple, and bring back to her face and heart some of the glad light of early days. In the scenes im-

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mediately preceding this, when the girl listens hopelessly to the stern commands and cruel threats of her father, the actress is seen at her best. Her look is dazed with sorrow. She takes in imperfectly what is said to her, and as one avenue after another, to which, like some hunted animal, she turns, is seen to bristle with spears, a smile of heroic resolve breaks forth when she remembers that death at least remains to enable her to escape the menaced calamity. Especially excellent is her delivery of the lines to her Nurse, after receiving from her lips the iniquitous counsel to "marry with the county :"—

Well, thou hast comforted me marvellous much.

The potion-scene is profoundly impressive, the look of horror and recoil as her imagination conjures up the thought of what may happen to her in the grim vault, of which she is to be the only living inmate, being appalling. We can conceive of this scene being enacted with more reserve of force. No living English exponent has, however, rendered it equally thrilling, and it is possible that, with less expenditure of effort, a less powerful result might be obtained. There are passages before this in which a higher effect might be obtained by rendering the feeling more remote. Juliet's observation upon asking the name of Romeo—

If he be married,
My grave is like to be my wedding bed—

might with advantage be delivered with less significance. Juliet's vision of coming sorrow is dim, and her words are scarcely intended to do more than hint at the calamity to which, in youthful defiance of omen, she refers. It is difficult to explain here clearly what is meant. Juliet, however, though, obedient to some inward impulse, she speaks words the melancholy portent of which is obvious to the audience, does not herself believe in the reality of

the danger foreshadowed. Her look, then, should be fatal rather than tragic, if the things can be separated. She should look what in old English and in Scotch is called "fey"—fated to die, rather than impressed with an absolute prevision of her own destiny. In tragic power and in beauty the impersonation is alike remarkable; and the suggestions we make affect only the rendering of individual passages, and do not detract from the general merits of a performance which is one of the highest on the modern stage. Serious alterations have been made in the version, the play being now performed in six acts. As these scarcely interfere with the order of the scenes, and not at all with the spoken dialogue, and as the result is to secure what in modern days is called a dramatic termination to each act, it is difficult to censure them. Innovations of this kind are dangerous, however, as they pave the way to further alterations. In Shakspeare's days it was not sought, as now, to terminate an act with a tableau. Modern practices in this respect do not seem to have done much for the stage. There is a growing danger that, in our regard for the dramatic grouping of figures, we may lose sight of that more important province of the dramatist, the subordination of incident to character.

At the outset of his new drama, "Too True," Mr. Jan. 29, 1876. Craven has sought, apparently, to quit the track along which he is in the habit of journeying. Habit, however, or something of the kind, has proved too strong for him, and he has ended, in his own despite, by bowling along the familiar road to the customary terminus. The historical background he has provided is of small effect: the armed troopers, the laced retainers, all the historical frippery he has brought together, are of no account with his audience, or, when they move it at all, move it only to

derision. Stripped of superfluous and irrelevant matter, "Too True," which has been given at the Duke's Theatre, is as completely domestic in interest as "The Post Boy" or "The Chimney Corner". Mr. Craven will, we think, do well to learn the lesson that his line does not extend beyond those well-defined limits within which his triumphs have been accomplished, and that the endeavour to add historical dignity to the characters he draws is about as serviceable as would be the plan of dressing himself in greaves and hauberk to face the customary perils of the streets.

It has, from time to time, been the fashion among painters to meet on given days at each other's houses, and devote a couple of hours to a water-colour sketch of some subject suggested by the host of the evening. How powerless are men to get out of familiar grooves has been shown again and again on these occasions. The choice of a subject would not enable a painter to depart from his customary line. Whether the theme were war or physic, Landseer would still furnish a study of animal life, Stanfield would draw his illustration from marine affairs, and Roberts would furnish an interior. So it is with Mr. Craven. His new historical drama is but his domestic drama "writ large". His added finery serves no purpose except to get in the way of his feet and make him stumble.

The main interest of his drama is derived from the sufferings of a husband who sees his wife condemned to death and is powerless to save her. In order further to complicate the matter he is supplied with apparent cause for jealousy, his wife's sentence having been incurred in an attempt to rescue a young gallant who has seemed for a short period his rival in her affections. To bring about this situation Mr. Craven has placed once more upon the stage the famous doings of the Bloody Assize, and has presented the man whose life has to be saved as com-

promised with the authorities in consequence of affording shelter to Monmouth. This historical background proves wholly inappropriate—so inappropriate, indeed, that the audience is absolutely startled at finding the heroine condemned to be burned at the stake for the offence of sheltering a suspected traitor. Mr. Craven quotes from Macaulay a passage to the effect that James the Second regarded as the worst of traitors those who harboured rebels. Such a statement does not reconcile us to the idea of a woman being burned for a political offence. Theological heresy, such as a charge of witchcraft, has generally been necessary to induce men to treat women with such deplorable cruelty. Another result of the treatment is that Government is represented as attaching to the grant of a pardon to the condemned woman a condition so extravagant that it would, if true, deserve to be classed with jocular tenures and other such whimsicalities. That a striking situation is thus obtained does not vindicate the employment of such a *deus ex machinâ* as a Government condescending in its punitive measures to attach absurd conditions to the arrest of a criminal. To the treachery of a jealous woman is ascribable the peril of the heroine. After the supposed traitor has escaped, his mistress, jealous of his relations to the woman who has aided him, contrives by a forgery to incriminate her, and to make the apparent responsibility of the deed fall upon the fugitive. That a man who hears of such infamy being coupled with his name should return to yield himself in place of the victim of her own humanity is conceivable; that the authorities should insist, as the sole condition on which pardon could be accorded to the woman imprisoned and condemned, that the returned rebel must be yielded up by his mistress, and none other, shows a species of squeamishness with regard to the capture of enemies with which the Government of James has not been credited. Thus though the tortures of Janet

Coventry are intense, we refuse to believe in them. A struggle keener than that she undergoes can scarcely be exhibited. She watches with despairing eyes the progress to the stake of one whom she has sent to his death, as she now knows, with no shadow of cause; she hears from agonising lips the charge of murder brought against her; and she listens to the conjurations of her lover himself, who urges her to comply with the cruel demand, and yield him up, assuring her that on this condition alone will he forgive the wrong she has done his honour. Too much for human force, or at least for her force, is the sacrifice. She can die herself in place of her victim; but her lover she cannot, and will not, surrender. This is fine in itself, and is true to feminine nature. So true is it we cannot repress our regret that it springs out of an impossibility, and so fails to commend itself to the intelligence. The play has interest. Its comic characters are so weak and tiresome, it would be unjust to lay upon the exponents, poor as these showed themselves, the reproach of the ironical demonstrations with which they were hailed. The leading characters are sympathetic, and one or two of them are well supported. Mr. Craven's own acting in the husband of the condemned woman has pathos. Miss Louisa Moore shows feeling as the heroine, and Mr. Macklin presents conscientiously the young fugitive. The general interpretation, however, is weak. In spite of the warm reception awarded the play at its close, it may be doubted whether it has a chance of lasting popularity. Its claims to rank as art are dependent upon one or two strong situations. The dialogue is in prose, which is so cadenced as to convey at times the impression we are listening to blank verse.

It is strange that "As You Like It," which has been revived at the Haymarket, should not, during late years, have been given with a strong cast, and under conditions that might obtain for it a prolonged run. In days when the "School for Scandal," "Money," "London Assurance," and other pieces of established reputation, have been played for scores and hundreds of nights, there seems to be a chance for a piece which is at once a work of the highest imagination and the most effective of acting comedies. It may be said of this play that, under the most pitiful conditions, with the sorriest company, and with no more effective scenery than the stock resources of a fourth-rate theatre can always supply, its hold upon an audience, once attracted, is stronger than that of any other dramatic work. There is probably no instance of a man of taste having once entered a theatre while it was in course of performance, and resisting its influence, or leaving before the close. Nowhere else in literature are the real and the Arcadian so harmoniously united. That enchanted ground of Arden is at once fairy-land and home. Its denizens are influenced by passions such as our own. They yield to joys and sorrows with which we sympathise, and are, in all respects, our counterparts. Yet the world is one in which the baser part of our nature falls off or is purified. The murderer who enters its precincts confesses his crime, and makes tardy atonement. The usurper, at the head of banded troops, forsakes his schemes of vengeance, and relinquishes his ill-gotten possessions. Nothing remains to tell of human error, except a little gentle and gracious banter of folly. The world is Love's world, and Love is lord of all. In presence of that great potentate, prince and peasant are equal, and the noble, with frank avowal, responds to the confidences of the clown. What Silvius professes for Phebe, Orlando echoes for Rosalind. Over the play this magic broods, and the first words the princess finds to say to the man who, in her

presence, wrestles with and overthrows his enemy, show how paramount is the sway of Love :—

Sir, you have well deserved ;
If you do keep your promises in love
But justly, as you have exceeded promise,
Your mistress shall be happy.

Ignorance supplies the only reason why the public are not attracted to "As You Like It" as they are to other plays. Once let the playgoing world know what is provided for them, and the result cannot be doubtful. Now, however, when the most popular of English actresses plays Rosalind, in a theatre that claims to be the special home of comedy, "As You Like It" is employed as a mere stop-gap, and is put up for no more than four nights.

The company cannot be regarded as strong, though some parts are fairly sustained. Miss Neilson is irresistible in the forest scenes, and gives the banter of Orlando and the inveighal against Phebe with marvellous brightness. Her madcap spirits, natural enough in one capable of disguising herself in hose and doublet, fairly run away with her, and carry with them the spectator; and the archness and sauciness of the whole, dashed as they are at times with sadness and with passion, are electrical. The lighter scenes in this play are better than those in "Juliet," more impulsive and freer from artifice. Mr. Conway's *Orlando* is manly in the early scenes, and is capable throughout. Especially good is the manner in which, yielding to the irresistible fascination of his disguised mistress, he yet conveys a sense of the ludicrous side of the mock wooing in which he is called to indulge. Mr. Harcourt's *Jacques* has points of merit, but is decidedly inferior to his *Mercutio*.

AFTER the attempt of the Laureate to give dramatic expression to the hysterical ecstasies of Mary Tudor comes Mr. Taylor's effort to dignify and idealise the love fancies of Anne Boleyn. The one experiment is about as hopeless as the other. Mary's cruel zeal and fanatical intolerance, which coupled eternally with her name the most odious epithet, by means of which a nation has resented and revenged its wrongs, are scarcely more distasteful to English thought or more repellent to English sympathies than Anne's sly cajolery of her royal master. Both characters are, indeed, the product of foreign influences. Mary's religion was born beneath Spanish skies in the dark heart of Isabella, and Anne's arts were learned of French and Italian intriguers at the Court of the first Francis. It is difficult to conceive how a dramatist so skilful as Mr. Taylor, and so quick to feel the public pulse, can have fallen into an error so grave as is involved in the choice of a heroine. Something might, perhaps, have been hoped from Anne's connection with the movement out of which sprang the Reformation. Without, however, wholly ignoring this, Mr. Taylor has reduced it to the position of an episode, one of many in which the public is not greatly interested. As such even it failed in its effect, and a long passage about no home being without an English Bible did not win any strong manifestation of approval. Leaning but slightly upon such supports, the dramatist has presented Anne as in love with her bluff wooer, has endeavoured to palliate her treachery and elevate her whimsies to the dignity of passion. The treatment wants the only justification that could be advanced in its behalf—success. Not for a moment does the heroine touch our sympathies or get near our hearts; and the only feeling aroused when Jane Seymour revenges the wrongs of Katharine is that poetic justice has been awarded. It is, of course, impossible not to detest the treachery, cruelty, and servility which led Anne to the block, in order to leave

her royal paramour free to contract fresh nuptials as brief and as dishonouring as those from which he is loosed. Pity is, however, tardy in declaring itself, and never approaches the point at which it grows tragic. Anne's character is, indeed, deficient, not only in everything that prepares the way for tragic terror, but in such minor, if still important, qualifications as dignity and womanliness. Her position beside her mistress, whom she betrays, will not readily in England win forgiveness, while her intrigue with her royal lover develops no single quality that can obtain for illicit passion either pardon or sympathy. It is essentially pitiful and unromantic, and such, in the dramatic action Mr. Taylor has shaped, it remains.

In his treatment of his subject, Mr. Taylor has not been much happier than in its choice. He has over-crowded his canvas with characters which serve no important, or, at least, no adequate purpose. He has sought, apparently, to give a picture of the life of an epoch, rather than to evolve carefully a dramatic conception. As a consequence, the slight thread of fable is lost sight of in the complication of details; no strong sympathy is enlisted, and no feeling is provoked strong enough to conquer the sense of weariness begotten of long and unnecessary dialogue. Very pretty are the scenes of wooing in the pleasance at Hever Court; songs and dances are edifyingly correct in archæological respects, and the pageant of history is carefully unfolded. Something more than this is required to make a play, and this something is wanting. It is useless to go *seriatim* through the scenes of Anne's life which Mr. Taylor has selected for stage presentation, since they fail to supply us with a distinct idea of her character.

We see her passionately enamoured of Percy, whom, however, she dismisses so soon as she finds he is timid enough to fear paternal indignation, and take counsel of prudence in his dealings with love. To avoid a hated

match with the Butlers, she defies her father, Wolsey, Northumberland, and Henry himself; preparing, if needs be, to fly from the Court rather than yield her liberty. Under the smiles of her royal lover she warms, until her conscience, mistrustful ever, is quieted, and she throws herself into his arms before her predecessor's divorce has been pronounced. Once married, her knowledge of her own frailty does not render her lenient in her treatment of those butterfly proceedings in her Court in which she has once been an ardent participator. Jane Seymour's behaviour to the King, closely resembling her own, rouses her to madness of jealousy, in which she seems ready to take her rival's life. In presence of defeat, dishonour, and imminent death, she grows pious and heroical, going in the end to the block with fortitude and composure. It is possible enough for a woman to go through these states of feeling. There is, however, no dominant or informing quality which enables us to single Anne from other heroines, or to speculate as to how she will behave under anticipated conditions. She is not even "constant in inconstancy". A certain frankness of manner and a girlish sincerity of bearing seem rather a gift of the actress than the dramatist. Miss Neilson succeeded, indeed, in giving the character a virginal charm, which at one period went near rendering it sympathetic. In presence of Anne's rapture at recovering an early gift of Henry of which Wyatt had deprived her, the most suspicious of husbands would retain no spark of jealousy. Her pride and delight in her imperious master recall the child-like gratification of Amy Robsart with the splendour of Leicester. The defiance of Jane Seymour rose to dramatic intensity, and the prosaic scenes of separation from her maidens received impressiveness from the bearing of the actress. These scenes are, however, clogged with unnecessary business; her triumph over her rival leads to a defeat more humiliating than that she has inflicted, and

her presentation of souvenirs to her friends at the moment of departure is trivial. It is natural that a queen should give her attendants at such supreme moment some gage of affection. It should be personal, however; some jewel hastily unclasped, the scarf that enfolds her, something of which she can hurriedly divest herself—not books brought by an attendant, and recalling school-prizes bestowed on pupils at the moment of breaking-up for the holidays. Some of the subordinate characters received satisfactory interpretation. Miss Carlisle's *Jane Seymour* was feline, and Miss Henri's *Lady Rochford* subtle and venomous. Both presentations were satisfactory, and the former showed dramatic insight. Mr. Arthur Cecil's *Chapuis* had a breadth which nothing in the previous performances of the actor had shown. Mr. Howe, Mr. Kyrle, Mr. Conway, and Mr. Robertson acquitted themselves satisfactorily in other parts.

Feb. 19, 1876. THE reflection forced upon the mind by the kind of audience assembled upon a first night at the Lyceum, and by the reception awarded Mr. Irving when he essays a new character, is that the modern English actor has stumbled upon fortunate times. Kean, in the height of his triumphs, awoke no greater enthusiasm than is now displayed; and Macready, during his best days, inspired no equal interest. It is necessary to turn, indeed, to France, and the career of Rachel, when she stood forth the confessed queen of tragedy, if we would find instances of parallel excitement. With the sound of frantic and reiterated applause still ringing in the ears, it is impossible to doubt the sincerity of public conviction. Rightly or wrongly, a considerable portion of the playgoing public sees in Mr. Irving the actor of the day, or of the future, and regards the Lyceum management as possessing the strongest claim upon its

consideration. Each opinion is defensible. Not only in points of detail, but in the manner generally in which pieces are produced under its care, the Lyceum management is worthy of praise, while of Mr. Irving it may be said that no living English actor takes greater pains to justify the opinions his friends express, and none unites more physical advantages to energy more untiring. Successive experiments, however, do as much to strengthen the opinion, already finding utterance, that Mr. Irving's highest reputation will not be achieved in Shakspearian parts, as to harden his admirers in their conviction that in him is continued the long roll of great tragedians. At the present moment Mr. Irving's art is not tragic. That it may grow such under the influence of time is probable enough. The roughest and strongest wines are those on which time exercises most beneficial effects. Mr. Irving, however, has to be judged as he now is. His *Othello* is as far as his *Macbeth*, and farther than his *Hamlet*, from conveying the idea of one capable of forming and expressing a great conception of a heroic character. Such light as there is falls upon *Othello* from without, and is not generated within. Parts are intelligent, others rise into impressiveness and power, and in one or two cases there is some of the electricity of passion. The whole is, however, unequal, and wanting in sustained force. No great conception animates and intensifies the impersonation. It is not too much to say that *Othello* is scarcely individualised. There are moments when we might fancy the character was *Macbeth* or *Julius Cæsar* with a brown face; there is a complete, and, as it appears, a studied absence of Oriental colour, and there is more of European culture and refinement than of African imagination and heat of temperament. Add to this that the performance is disturbed by mannerism and disfigured by excess of grimace, and adequate reasons are adduced against its standing in the first rank of art.

To show cause for a defect is not to remove or justify it. The too plaintive and lachrymose side of Mr. Irving's Othello is probably ascribable to a desire on the part of the actor to avoid any appearance of following in the footsteps of Signor Salvini. An artist, however, has nothing to do with previous performance. He has to get as near as possible to the character he assumes, and if others before him have realised a phase of it, he is not, therefore, to misread that phase, or leave it altogether unnoticed. Between the undraped animalism of the Othello of Signor Salvini and the moral and intellectual stays and starch of that of Mr. Irving there is a wide field. Somewhere in this the true conception of Othello lies. It is far nearer the idea of the Italian, however, than that of the Englishman.

Turning from the conception of Othello, the chief fault in which seems to be the absence of anything on which to seize, the deficiency of colour and of individuality before noted, we come to the points in the performance worthy of praise. The best portion is the commencement of the third act. In this Othello's slowness to attach any import to the words of his tempter, the vague uneasiness growing to horror of he knows not what, were finely thought out and well expressed. Mr. Irving appeared to us to accept the hints of Iago as applying to Cassio alone, and resolutely to banish from his mind the thought they might strike nearer home until absolute direction was given them by the words "Beware, my lord, of jealousy". This is a defensible view, probably the most defensible view. Every word in the text seems to convey that Othello up to this point suspects Iago of possessing some knowledge of designs upon Desdemona on the part of Cassio. No thought, however, of the possible complicity of Desdemona has as yet presented itself. It is suggested remotely when the words "Oh, misery" are spoken in answer to Iago's picture of the torments of jealousy. This

view has not before found so clear and intelligible expression. Individual passages in this part of the play were as conspicuously good as the general conception. Almost the only drawback from the scene was the pronunciation of the word "echoes" in the line "By heaven, he echoes me," as though it were spelt "echo-o-oes me," an instance of Mr. Irving's worst and most besetting mannerism. An earlier instance of this went near ruining the entire performance. When, after the brawl begotten of Cassio's drunkenness, Othello entered upon the scene, Mr. Irving's painful elaboration of the words—

Hold, for your lives !

produced an outburst of laughter, by which the actor was apparently so disturbed as to be unable for some time to regain the requisite presence of mind. To this may be ascribed the fact that Othello during the whole of this scene appeared calm and deliberate, instead of being under the influence of the scarcely repressible excitement which his words over and over again indicate. The delivery of the phrase "I'll not believe it" was excellent, and the utterance of the words "Oh, blood, blood, blood!" was electrical. Fine acting in these scenes was marred, however, by excessive grimace. Mr. Irving's features are apparently too mobile, and it is not until the fifth act, when, after the death of Desdemona, he assumes a stare of desperation, that he allows any one emotion to hold possession of his face long enough to be quite intelligible. The scene in which Othello falls into what Iago calls an epilepsy, usually omitted in representation, is now restored, and is useful in showing the inward disturbance which prompts the Moor to his terrible action. The signs of swooning had obviously been closely studied, and were faithfully conveyed. Mr. Irving's bearing before the envoys from Venice was good, and his exit upon the words "Goats and monkeys!" was effective. A sense of

defeat and weariness was expressed at the commencement of the last act, and the blank desolation of the concluding scene was impressive.

We have dwelt upon what seemed worthy of praise rather than upon defects of style, so far as regards individual passages, since the task would be long to mention in detail the scenes in which a different bearing or tone seemed desirable. Of the more passionate scenes generally, it is enough to say that, while they disclosed thought and intention, they were uneasily and inadequately rendered, and more frequently violent than intense.

Of Mr. Forrester's *Iago* it is difficult to speak too highly. For the first time for many years, we have seen an *Iago* by whom *Othello* without extreme folly could be deceived. The acting was honest and plausible throughout, and had a wheedling and cajoling tenderness in the scenes of *Othello's* trial that intensified the villainy of the part, while it explained the credulity of the Moor. In the fifth act the look of cynical contempt mixed with pain from his wound, and somewhat of interest with which *Iago* contemplated the results of his machinations, was excellent.

Mr. Brooke, as *Cassio*, might, with advantage, assume more importance of bearing, when in the flush of his new dignity he enters to *Othello*. His drunkenness, moreover, was too good-natured. *Cassio's* is a morose and splenetic drunkenness; a man who is hilariously excited by liquor is not likely to draw upon his companion without any apparent cause. Mr. Mead's *Brabantio* was excellent in action, but too rotund in speech. Miss Bateman's *Emilia* was spirited, and her delivery of the harangue against the Moor proved profoundly stirring and impressive. Miss Isabel Bateman's *Desdemona* was graceful; her attitudes were at times expressive. Her voice, however, in the emotional scenes, was metallic and unsympathetic. Her singing of the Willow Song, an injudicious introduction under the circumstances, with a less friendly majority

would have stopped the performance. The mounting of the piece, and the general arrangements, showed intelligence. Some unjustifiable liberties are, however, taken. Why has Roderigo no sword? It is impossible to conceive a young Venetian accompanying, weaponless, an armed expedition of his countrymen, and entering into the fray with Cassio. In Iago's description to Othello of the riot at Cyprus, he speaks of "Cassio following him with determined sword". Cassio does no such thing, nor could he well, seeing that Roderigo has no means of resistance. There is room for amendment in the opening business, moreover, as regards the disposition of the followers of the Duke, and those of Brabantio.

The entire performance has interest and value. It belongs, however, to an epoch which future days will probably regard as transitional.

To Mr. Neville's growing inclination to play such *rôles*, Feb. 26, 1876.
partly chivalrous, partly comic, in the romantic drama as
have been associated with the fame of M. Mélingue, may
be ascribed his production at the Olympic of a version of
"Le Gascon" of M. Barrière. The original piece was given
at the Gaité in the autumn of 1873, when that theatre
first passed under the management of M. Offenbach. Its
nine tableaux have been reduced to six, a considerable
number of excisions have been made, and something more
of a Scottish air has been given to the whole by the sub-
stitution of familiar Scotch patronymics for the *noms de*
fantaisie of the author. Not easy, however, is it to render
tolerable to English notions French treatment of British
themes. Two causes are operative in producing this
result: the first, the complete ignorance of Frenchmen in
general of any aspect of English thought or feeling; the
second, their unconquerable disposition to sentimentalise

all subjects with which they deal. Never, perhaps, was the national tendency more fully illustrated than when Mr. Fechter presented Hamlet as a typical *jeune premier*. M. Barrière follows in the same track, and exhibits Mary Stuart as indulging with Chastelard in a love intrigue as rapid in growth as it is vulgar in development. According to Puff, in the "Critic," this treatment is always permissible. "It is a received point among poets that where history gives you a good heroic outline for a play you may fill up with love at your own discretion; in doing which nine times out of ten you only make up a deficiency in the private history of the times." We have now had more than enough "scandal," however, if not about "Queen Elizabeth," at least about her rival and victim.

There is no need to enter upon the question of Mary's relations with the French poet, whom M. Barrière, like Mr. Swinburne, has made the hero of his drama. It is repellent, however, to find Queen Mary in her amours recalling a servant-girl who has but one Sunday in a fortnight in which to complete her task of conquest. In saying this we are not laying the entire blame upon Mrs. Rousby. The fault is, in some measure, that of the dramatist, who, besides depicting the courts of Paris and Edinburgh as the scene of perpetual intrigue, which doubtless they were, has, moreover, presented the Queen and her maids-of-honour as whispering in corners with men they scarcely know, and running off at every moment when a chance is afforded of leaving together, we will not say a pair of lovers, but a couple of beings of opposite sexes. This primary vulgarity of conception is intensified by the actress, who, in yielding, goes beyond the apparent intention of the dramatist. No very shocking or unfamiliar picture is presented when a young lover is seen singing beneath the balcony of his mistress, nor is the guerdon judged excessive if the lady, queen though she be, drops from the opened lattice to her gallant a flower or

a billet. Far beyond this goes, however, Mary Stuart. She realises to the utmost the dream that Keats framed for Psyche, who, be it remembered, is the bride of Cupid—a dream of

— all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win ;
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night
To let the warm Love in.

Long before the musician is heard Mary is “craning” forth from the lattice to watch for his arrival. Her passion finds voluble utterance, and when Chastelard ascends to her chamber her arms enfold his neck, and her warm kisses are showered upon him with such rapture that her subsequent avowal that she loves him, instead of coming to him as a surprise, is startling for its tardiness rather than for its vehemence.

The Gascon meanwhile, in the English version entitled *Le Chevalier Artaban de Puycadère*, is a compound of D’Artagnan and Don Cæsar de Bazan, with a slight suggestion of *Le Capitaine Fracasse*, and even, in his surroundings, of Edgar of *Ravenswood*. He is the sworn friend of Chastelard and of Mary, and to his watchfulness, bravery, power of recovery from wounds, and capacity for lying, it is due, first, that Mary finds her way into Holyrood ; next, that she escapes the machinations of a certain Lord Maxwell and other turbulent nobles ; and, lastly, that the life of her lover is preserved to a period beyond the close of the drama. His own reward comes in the shape of a princedom and the hand of Mary Carmichael. The drama has spirit, but the extravagance of which it is full is unsuited to English tastes. That comedy of cape and sword which began in Spain, and has kept a hold upon the public of France and Southern Italy, has never maintained long a place among nations with a trace of Teutonic blood. Fond as Englishmen have shown themselves of the novels of Dumas, once the master of this class of

literature, his plays have met with no permanent favour, and "The Corsican Brothers" is the only work from his pen which can still, so far as London is concerned, be called an acting piece.

Mr. Neville played the Gascon, first supported by M. Lafontaine, with spirit and gallantry, and Mrs. Rousby looked admirably the part of *Mary*. The remaining characters were sustained by Miss Josephs, Mrs. Stephens, Mr. G. Neville, Mr. W. H. Fisher, and other members of the company. In plays of this kind, however, English acting realises too fully, presenting what should be suggested, and shocking by a naked sincerity of detail.

A DRAMATIC version of an episode in the "Bleak House" of Dickens is the latest novelty at the Globe. If "Jo" survives a charge of being too gloomy, to which it must be pronounced open, since there is not an act without a death, natural or violent, and the whole interest seems to spring and end in a burial-ground, it may claim a favourable verdict. It traces to its end the career of Jo, the typical street vagabond, in whose favour Dickens sought to enlist English sympathies. Its sad lesson needs, indeed, to be taken to heart. In a sense this story of Jo's sufferings is an idyll of our streets. As the sound of Consuelo's kisses still clings to the walls of Venice Jo's hoarse and plaintive murmurs, as he is driven forth along his restless path, may yet be supposed to echo through our courts and byways. To this story the whole action of the play is subordinated. There is no pretence of a love interest, for Guppy's impudent advances to Esther can no more claim the title than the freely accorded kiss bestowed by "Guster" upon the hero when the end is at hand. The melodramatic portions of the novel, the disappearance and death of Lady Dedlock, the death of Sir

Leicester, the murder of Mr. Tulkinghorn, the arrest of Hortense, and the inquest upon Jo's mysterious benefactor, are only introduced for the apparent purpose of showing how they affect this waif of society. Some ingenuity is displayed in the way in which these not too homogeneous interests are welded and shaped into three acts. The dramatist has, however, been fortunate in the exponent he has obtained for the principal part. Miss Jenny Lee, a young lady known principally in burlesque, played the part of Jo with a realism and a pathos difficult to surpass. In get up and in acting the character was thoroughly realised ; and the hoarse voice, the slouching dejected gait, and the movements as of some hunted animal, were admirably exhibited. Mr. Burnett, the author, played *Buckett*, the detective; Miss Dolores Drummond showed power as *Hortense*; Mr. Wilmot gave a picture of unctuous sanctimony as *Mr. Chadband*; and Miss Kate Lee exhibited some promise as *Guster*. The play was received with favour, in spite of the sepulchral element in it so largely developed that the idea of a dramatisation of "Blair's Grave" appears now scarcely extravagant. The comic scenes, as a rule, were failures, and Mrs. Snagsby's jealousies and Mr. Guppy's impertinencies might with advantage be excised.

CHAPTER VII.

Haymarket : "Measure for Measure".—Lyceum : "Queen Mary," a drama in five acts, by Alfred Tennyson.

April 8, 1876. "MEASURE FOR MEASURE" has never been a favourite acting play. After the production in 1604 no record exists of any representation until, in 1700, at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, Betterton played Angelo, and Mrs. Bracegirdle Isabella, in a version altered by Gildon after Davenant. In 1720 "Measure for Measure" was again given at the same theatre, with Quin as the Duke, a part he was still playing a quarter of a century later. In 1738 it was performed at Drury Lane; in 1742 at Covent Garden; and in 1746 at both houses, Peg Woffington making this year her first appearance as the heroine. In 1755 and 1775 it was again given at Drury Lane, and at Covent Garden in 1770 and 1780. On November 3, 1783, Mrs. Siddons made her first appearance as Isabella. In 1794 she repeated her performance, Kemble playing the Duke; Charles Kemble, Claudio; Blanchard, Elbow; Knight, Lucio; and Emery the Clown. In 1816 Young appeared as the Duke and Miss O'Neil as Isabella. In 1824 the Duke was assumed by Macready, Liston was an abominable Lucio, and Mrs. Bunn was the heroine. After another long lapse of years, "Measure for Measure" was revived by Mr. Phelps at Sadler's Wells, with himself as the Duke, and Miss Glyn as Isabella. It has since slept, so far as the English stage is concerned, until, on Saturday last, it was produced at the Haymarket.

The reason for this comparative failure seems to be that none of the characters is thoroughly sympathetic. Coleridge pronounces Isabella unamiable, and Claudio detestable. Not less detestable surely is Angelo, whose passion might, perhaps, be pardoned, but whose subsequent treachery is pitiful and abominable. Lucio is a confirmed liar; Mariana is ready to purchase, by means not too satisfactory, a union with Angelo, who does not love her, and who, morally, is no great catch. The Duke himself is so occupied with plots and mysteries, so tortuous in his proceedings, and so self-satisfied, it is difficult to feel any great admiration for him. Pompey and his disreputable surroundings are amusing, but not too edifying; and Barnardine is scarcely higher in the moral scale than Caliban. Contrary to Shakspeare's wont, accordingly, he leaves nothing in which the spectator can feel strong interest, except the story and the poetical grace of the language. In order to understand the indignation into which Isabella is provoked by her brother's cowardice, it is necessary to remember not only that she is a pure-minded woman, but that she is a nun, or, at least, one who has elected to embrace conventional vows and discipline. Each line that she speaks discloses that she is adopting this vocation through no persuasion of others, but on account of her own disposition to a religious life. She may fairly, then, be assumed to have so familiarised her mind with death as to regard with absolute contempt one who, at the price of dishonour, would purchase a prolongation of that "death called life, which us from life doth sever". It is necessary to bear this in mind, not to find extravagant as well as cruel her outbreak when she bids the faint-hearted criminal

Die! perish! Might but my bending down
Reprieve thee from thy fate, it should proceed:
I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death,—
No word to save thee,

It is passages such as this which make Coleridge declare the play “the most painful—say, rather, the only painful part of Shakspeare’s works”; which cause Hazlitt to declare “that our sympathies are repulsed and defeated in all directions”; and drive the temperate Hallam to ask concerning Isabella “whether, if Claudio had been really executed, the spectator would not have gone away with no great affection for her”. Isabella in some respects stands, indeed, alone in fiction. As a rule, the heroines of drama extort our admiration by the readiness with which they make sacrifices for the sake of those they love. Isabella claims it on different ground. She refuses to save her brother at the price of her honour. She could, it is true, adopt no other course. Still, while admitting that some credit is to be claimed by one who will not yield up the grace of feminine existence for the sake of a brother, we have a feeling it is possible to question whether a more powerful motive, such as the same danger to herself, might not have driven her to different conduct. No one, of course, believes that Isabella *would* have saved her own life at the cost of her honour. Virtue, however, exercised at the expense of others can only be regarded as partially tested. While dealing with the play, it is curious to notice an instance, the only one we recall in Shakspeare, of that yielding to the demands of an audience, which goes some way towards ruining modern comedy. At the close the Duke asks Isabella to lay aside her vows and marry him. Nothing that has gone before justifies this proposal, which is creditable neither to the woman nor her suitor.

In all essentials Miss Neilson’s interpretation was admirable. Our stage has supplied us during late years with few instances of exposition more ample and more satisfactory. There is, of course, less variety of emotion in Isabella than in Rosalind, to say nothing of Juliet. So far as the character extends it was, however, perfectly expressed. In

her convent dress and devoid of all ornaments, Miss Neilson looked the character to the life, and she gave the speeches allotted to her in a manner that brought to light their remotest beauties. The conception, indeed, seems incapable of improvement. In matters of detail some modifications might be adopted. Isabella might thus, with advantage, wait on her knees for the Duke to raise her, and not stretch her hands as though anticipating an inevitable action. More important still, when the Duke says to her unexpectedly:—

Give me your hand, and say you will be mine,—

it would be better, instead of smiling a gratified response, to assume a sweet and timid doubt and dismay. This is true to the character Miss Neilson has all along presented. One who has banished all idea of earthly bliss, who has already in heart put off the hope of earthly spousals, will receive with surprise and misgiving the words that first suggest a resumption of human ties. Should she even have learned to love the Duke, of which there is no sign, she will still retain her maiden gentleness and fears. The reception of the performance was so warm as to indicate that, whatever may be said against the character of Isabella, its power to move an audience is not to be doubted. In the third act the calls were enthusiastic and repeated. At this stage, however, the acting of the heroine, good throughout, attained its climax, and was admirably fine and impressive. Mr. Conway's *Lucio* was a good study. Mr. Howe played carefully the *Duke*, a character concerning which Macready has left on record an opinion that "dignity of demeanour and lofty declamation are the chief requisites". Mr. Harcourt was *Angelo*, Mr. Warner *Claudio*, and Mr. Buckstone *Pompey*. Nothing in the cast calls for special comment. It is useless to draw attention to the changes which experience has recommended. The omission of the song in Mariana's house, "Take, O take

those lips away," etc., is regrettable, while that of the character of Juliet deprives Claudio of what little sympathy might be accorded him.

April 22, 1876.

THE alterations that have been made in "Queen Mary" amount to something like reconstruction. More than half the characters and nearly half the written dialogue disappear from the acted version. Among the personages omitted are not a few of highest importance. Cranmer, indeed, of whom sight is lost, and to whom scarcely more than a passing reference is made, is the most dramatic and imposing figure in the original. Pole and Bonner on the one hand, and Wyatt on the other, with Bagenhall and the more sturdy and independent of the nobles, withdraw, in the book, attention from the sufferings of Mary, and give an English complexion to the story. They do more, indeed, than this, since Bonner's burning hatred of the Reformers and the tergiversations of Pole, contrasting with Philip's politic and wily courtesy, point a lesson concerning the evils of sacerdotal rule which is the apparent moral of the piece. Mary herself is not, from the psychological standpoint, more interesting than Pole, and Bagenhall is the sturdiest, most interesting, and most truly English character in a work which, as is but natural, is largely occupied with foreign schemers and compounded of foreign intrigues.

With these characters disappears much that is best and most striking in the poetry. Those descriptions of the fate of Jane Grey, of the appearance of the pyres in Smith-field, and of the reception of Mary by the citizens, which are put into the mouth of Bagenhall, and constitute him a species of chorus, are all withdrawn. Mary's address to the child, which she is sanguine enough to believe has stirred within her, is omitted for another reason. In place

of these scenes we have some that are new. The additions, with one exception, are not too readily apparent. The change in the last act is important, since its effect is to retain the Queen upon the stage, and to present before the audience the death which previously was learned from Elizabeth. It is but natural, in the interests of dramatic art, as it has been always understood in England, that those sufferings which the Greek kept in the background should be brought into prominence. It may be doubted, however, whether the play gains much from the alteration, and whether there is not more that is truly dramatic in the manner in which, in the printed book, the life of Mary is encompassed, and, as it were, framed in that of Elizabeth. On the whole, the play, which has been hewn out of the book, is shapely and interesting. It is impressive, however, rather than dramatic, and it has scarcely more claim to retain possession of the stage than the chronicle plays of Shakspeare or than Marlowe's "Edward the Second".

The entire frame of this new work is filled by Mary. Philip, on the one side, serves to stimulate her passion and feed her jealousy, and Elizabeth, on the other, by her serenity, acts as a foil. No strong or genuine interest, however, is inspired by any one except the Queen. A measure of the responsibility of this rests upon the interpretation, which, in the case of Mary, is decidedly strong. The character of Philip offers but few opportunities, and of these some are missed, while that of Elizabeth is lost in the hands of the young actress to whom it is confided. Mary, however, stands forth, in every respect except one, as she is drawn by the Laureate. The hysterical exaltation which is the keynote to her character is kept in the background. Her strength and weakness are more heroic than they previously appeared. A true daughter of Henry, Mary is imperious in her treatment of those around her, and brave to impetuosity in presence of danger. Her zeal

in behalf of her religion is genuine, and is increased by her sufferings. In the blank silence that meets her prayers she finds rebuke for slackness of service, and her fanaticism feeds upon her tears. In this respect alone is the hysterical temperament denoted. The appearance of Philip changes her entire being. Mary might, indeed, address him in the words of one of the old dramatists:—

Thou art the powerful moon to my blood's sea,
To make it ebb and flow into my face
As thy looks change.

In his presence her whole nature is subverted. Like a flower in the sunshine she opens her breast to him and closes it so soon as he departs. But little, however, of the pale sunshine of his presence does Philip afford, and in the end Mary's defeat and desolation are complete. The closing scenes are imaginative rather than dramatic. There is some previous weakness in repetition of motive. In the third and fourth acts the business is almost identical. Mary vainly supplicates her husband to defer his departure, and a few words from Simon Renard obtain for her the boon she covets. The one dramatic action in the closing scene is when Mary stabs, with nervous hands, the picture of Philip, that it may not look upon her old, worn, and graceless. Her walk outside her chamber is natural and finely conceived from the poetical standpoint, rather than the dramatic, though the hushed voices of the women, who cluster together for protection, give it as much strength as is attainable in the absence of the principal figure. While Mary is before the audience, the emotions appear too various and quick-coming.

One woe doth tread upon another's heels.

High dramatic effect is scarcely to be obtained under such conditions. The burning intensity of sorrow is more happily illustrated in Constance, when the Queen and the

woman are alike forgotten in the mother. Mary's dying pangs would have been more impressive had her sorrows been less fluctuant, and had she been bold in passion, and so "forgotten" herself into the "marble" of death. Miss Bateman's acting in these scenes had remarkable intensity, and was higher than anything she has previously exhibited. Other characters were creditably supported. Mr. Brooke played *Simon Renard* with much care and discretion, avoiding the temptation to render it too vulpine, into which a less intelligent actor might have fallen. Mr. Irving looked splendidly princely as *Philip*, but had scarcely divested himself of what is grotesque in his method. It is doubtful, indeed, whether what is known as the tragedian's walk and voice are necessary in the case of *Philip*. No roundness of rhetorical delivery is called for. A stern, impassive, and rather wearied look and bearing are all that is needed. The few speeches to be delivered are of small importance.

It is but natural that extreme interest should be inspired by an occasion like the present. Enough success attended the experiment to encourage a repetition. It must always be remembered that complete success in dramatic ventures waits upon experience. No special triumph appears to have attended the first efforts of such dramatists even as Shakspeare and Corneille.

CHAPTER VIII.

Drury Lane : “*Amleto*”.—*Haymarket* : “*Medea*,” a tragedy in four acts from the German of *Grillparzer*.—*Drury Lane* : “*Il Re Lear*”.—*Haymarket* : “*Mary Stuart*”.—*Drury Lane* : “*Macbeth*”.—*Queen’s* : “*Othello*”.—*Drury Lane* : “*Romeo e Giulietta*”.—*Haymarket* : “*L’Étrangère*,” from the French of *Alexandre Dumas*.—*Lyceum* : “*The Belle’s Stratagem*”.

April 29, 1876. WHATEVER light foreign criticism may have cast upon the character of Hamlet, foreign interpreters have done little to change the opinions of Englishmen concerning it. Whether the view of Hamlet which, in course of succeeding generations, has come to be accepted and presented by English actors is correct, is a point that is, of course, open to question. It is at any rate superior in the estimation of the English playgoer to everything that other countries have shown him. Not few in number are the foreign artists who have played Hamlet in England. Within the last quarter of a century we have seen in the part Devrient, Rouvière, Fechter, Mr. Bandmann, Signor Salvini, and Signor Rossi. Of these one only excited much comment in England. Mr. Fechter’s Hamlet stirred to the depths public interest, and proved, indeed, the first important step that was taken in this country in the direction of that realism which since has laid siege to our stage. It is not now the time to debate upon the merits of actors whose claims have already been discussed. *Apropos*, however, of the appearance of Signor Rossi, it seems fitting to observe that southern actors have been less successful than their northern rivals in presenting

the character of Hamlet. So essentially northern in conception is "Hamlet," it may be doubted whether a true notion of it can win its way into Spanish or Italian brains. The meditative being, the dreamer, the man averse from action, whose thought is ever miles in advance of his deed, and not seldom so far in advance that "the flighty purpose never is o'ertook," is remote from southern conception. Something more, then, than a dissimilarity between two styles of acting is felt to exist when the Italian actor, Signor Salvini first, and Signor Rossi afterwards, exhibits Hamlet as indulging in vivacious and spirited, or even violent action. Doubts and hesitations concerning the "finer issues" to which Hamlet is touched meet us at every turn. With them, however, does not come any doubt as to the gravity and staidness of his manners, and his incapacity for such outbursts as Italian artists love to exhibit. It is difficult from the strange representation of Signor Rossi, heaped with extravagances of gesture and speech, to extract a recognisable theory of the character of Hamlet. We are thus compelled to deal with externals in the same manner as we can only judge of the appearance of those with whom we have no intimacy.

Signor Rossi's performance shows him to be a trained and accomplished actor, with a wide range of powers. It shows him also to have a theory of Hamlet which to Englishmen is wholly unintelligible. When Hamlet is seen in one act to clap his hands in ecstasy over the success of his scheme to entrap the King, when, seated on the throne, he spins about with arms and legs all in the air at the same time, or when, in the interview with his mother, he snatches from her with rough hands the portrait of her husband, and, with cries and gesticulations of rage, throws it upon the ground and stamps and dances upon it, the whole is, to northern feeling, undignified, excessive, and almost unmanly. No amount of talent in the exponent will ever reconcile an English or, we fancy, a German

audience to extravagances of this kind. It has been suggested that these are the results of the madness which, according to one view of Hamlet, seizes upon him at the time of the ghostly appearance. In order to render more tenable this view, those passages in which Hamlet addresses with apparent irreverence the Ghost—

Well said, old mole, canst work i' the earth so fast?
A worthy pioneer! etc.—

need to be restored to the acting text, since they seem to contain the first working of that "antic disposition" which, moved by some feeling of mental perturbation, or by some vague foreshadowing of the future, Hamlet declares his intention to don.

Madness, however, in northern natures, supposing Hamlet to be really mad, would scarcely take such forms as are now assigned it. It requires the sanguine current in southern veins to beget this species of frenzy. Every word Hamlet speaks shows how grave is his natural temperament, and a very slight ebullition will serve to indicate mental aberration. In the scene after the departure, in confusion, of the King, whom the sight of the acted murder has discomfited, Hamlet reaches the highest point of exaltation of which his nature is capable. This, however, is not *very* extravagant, as a reference to his words will prove. From the standpoint of general interpretation, there is little, then, to be learned from a performance which throughout is excessive, and to English feelings not far from grotesque. Readings of single passages are more frequently curious than commendable. Hamlet thus, in speaking to Guildenstern, says: "There is much music, excellent voice in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak". Instead of representing, as is customary, the recorder as the little organ, Signor Rossi slaps his chest, as though it were his own voice to which reference was made. A more defensible innovation

occurs earlier, when, at the close of the long speech of the player King, Polonius utters the remark : "Look, whether he has not turned his colour, and has tears in 's eyes," of Hamlet, and not of the actor. This, however, though ingenious, is incorrect. The words of Polonius are intended to prepare the mind of the spectator for the speech—

O what a rogue and peasant slave am I,

in which Hamlet contrasts his own stolid endurance of unheard-of wrongs with the actor's passion over the fictitious sorrows of Hecuba. The rendering of this speech is the best portion of Signor Rossi's performance.

THE piece in which Madame Janauschek makes her first May 6, 1876, appearance in London is a version of Grillparzer's "Das Goldene Fliess". So incompetent is, however, the translation, the English spectator is likely to be unjust to a play which has won a firm hold upon the German public. Produced in Vienna in 1822, before many Englishmen had heard that "unpronounceable name" of Grillparzer, with which Byron declared they would one day or other have to grow familiar, the "Golden Fleece," obtained a triumph due rather to the reputation of its author's previous plays, "Sappho" and "Die Ahnfrau," than to its intrinsic merits. It was then a species of trilogy, and made free use of the personages of Greek mythology. Subsequently it underwent numerous mutations, becoming, in the end, a stock piece upon the German stage. In its present shape it gives a clear and comprehensible view of the life of Medea in Corinth. The action commences with the divorce between Jason and Medea, and the betrothal of the former to Creusa, the daughter of Creon, his host. A special mandate from Delphi commands the banishment of Medea and Jason on account of the iniquities and sorceries perpetrated

during the quest and capture of the Golden Fleece. Half this injunction is obeyed, and half disregarded. Medea is banished, and Jason is retained. Vainly Medea appeals to Creon against the manifest injustice of this sentence ; vainly urges upon Jason his past love and her former services. Finding hopeless the attempt to rekindle burnt-out fires, and determined that no woman shall enjoy the love she has tasted and lost, Medea feigns acquiescence in the arrangements that are made. She then sends Creusa the poisoned robe, which, when worn, shall break into flames and consume her, and slays the children who are deaf to her pleading and prefer openly comfort and repose with strangers to a life of wandering and peril with their sad and terrible mother. At the close, Medea is seen sublime in triumph, invulnerable to human effort, and on the point of taking an unopposed departure for Athens.

A condemnation of the play involves the condemnation of the subject, since it is scarcely possible to present more intelligibly the events connected with Medea's stay in Corinth. The principal points in which the piece differs from that of Euripides consist in the decree of banishment issuing from Delphi, instead of from Creon himself, in the omission of the character of Ægeus, and in the loss and recovery by Medea of a casket containing her enchanted treasures, including the Golden Fleece. While, however, the main action is clear and simple, the language in the English version is trivial and commonplace to such an extent that it is difficult at times to resist an inclination to laughter. A company unused to pieces of this class supported feebly the principal characters, and the entire representation challenged the ridicule it not seldom elicited. Over all these difficulties the genius of Madame Janauschek triumphed. Putting altogether on one side the more tender aspects of Medea's character presented by Euripides, Madame Janauschek showed her

a passionate barbarian, whose nature could receive no polish from intercourse with the Greeks. But one idea could she entertain: Jason was hers, and rather than another should possess his love and enjoy his companionship she would upset the framework of the world. There was little need to emphasise her grief by the desertion of her children. Her jealousy needed no stimulus beyond the knowledge that Creusa was in Jason's arms. In this respect she came near the character of Othello. This conception of Medea, against which nothing of importance can be urged, received powerful portrayal. Madame Janauschek's acting is stagey in the sense that it aims at the picturesque as much as the dramatic. It is, however, superb in energy of defiance and in the uncontrolled freedom of movement that seems to belong to a wild animal. Her look has "the roused bull's glare," and fierce hunger for the love denied her burns in her eye. It remains to be seen whether the actress can present more subtle moods of pathos and suffering. Her *forte* appears, so far, to be the passionate rather than the pathetic. The lurid splendour of her performance was recognised by the public, and her representation was a conspicuous success.

SIGNOR ROSSI's successive performances reveal two May 13, 1876. facts: the first, that he is one of the most accomplished actors that have of late years appeared before the public; the second, that it is useless to expect from him any fresh light upon the creations of Shakspeare. So far, indeed, foreign art has done as little as foreign criticism to furnish the student with new views concerning the masterpieces of Shakspearian tragedy. Signor Salvini's *Othello* proved that southern theories concerning acting might, in the case of a character essentially southern, bring to light aspects which had previously been unobserved or unex-

pressed. Here ends the gain our stage has seen. The Hamlet of Signor Salvini, and the Hamlet and the Lear of Signor Rossi, so far from possessing any gift of illumination, scarcely reveal the germ of what can be called an idea of the characters. Such intellectual subtleties as have exercised the wits of English critics have not even presented themselves, and the artist who has come over to enact these parts is surprised to hear of their existence. Taking up the theory that Lear is a study of madness commencing to declare itself when the King yields his dominions to his children, attaining its height at the moment when he stands upon the heath, amid the elemental confusion, and passing away with passing life, Signor Rossi has presented this view again and again before admiring audiences in Italy and France. Quite dumbfounded is he to learn that something more is expected in England. We who have accustomed ourselves to find in every word of Lear some touching revelation of character and suffering, are not prepared to accept a representation in which breadth of view alone is aimed at, and all subtle gradations of shade are swallowed up in masses of colour. Like Signor Salvini, Signor Rossi has not only never seen those patient analyses of character which English criticism has framed; he has never, it is obvious, studied in Shakspeare the personages he presents. A slovenly, feeble, inaccurate, and misleading version of a portion of a play has supplied him with the outlines of an individuality which he presents, but which is as unlike the creation of Shakspeare as the *Æneas* of Cotton or of Scarron is to that of Virgil.

Thus, though the powers of the actor are remarkable, and are such as especially commend themselves to the more highly-trained portion of his audience, the result to the student, at least, is blank disappointment. In place of the hearty, impetuous, rash, and choleric King, impatient of contradiction, pitiless in his revenge upon slight wrong,

and yet burning with a desire to be loved by all around him, we find at the outset a capricious and half-irresponsible being, whose uncertain walk and impatient movements tell of fading intellect. This misapprehension continues, and is accentuated until, at the end, when we wait to see the bowed and whitened head sink to the ground in desolation and heart-break, we find in its place a study of the physical agonies of dissolution. There is scarcely a glimpse of that dignity which is a principal characteristic of Lear, and which makes him even in the very whirlwind of his madness recollect his state, and enjoy the consternation of those who dare not face his frown.

Ay, every inch a King:
When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.

It has, with some show of reason, been doubted whether Lear is a fit subject for histrionic illustration. Shakespeare, however, who intended the character for the stage, was a tolerable judge in such matters, and the avowal that no actor can greatly impress us in Lear involves only a condemnation of the state of our stage. There is much of Lear that is easier to present than corresponding portions of Othello, Hamlet, or Macbeth, though it may be admitted that the talent which would give adequate exposition to the entire character is not easy to find.

A single instance of the kind of errors which constantly occur in the Italian version will serve to show how difficult it is to deduce from it a rational conception of Lear. Small as appears the change, which consists only in the omission of a preposition, its effect is completely misleading. From the moment Lear sees Edgar on the heath, disguised as Tom, he conceives a remarkable regard for him. Vainly Gloucester seeks to lure the King to shelter. He says:—

First let me talk with this philosopher.—
What is the cause of thunder?

And again :—

I'll talk a word with this same learned Theban.

When, accordingly, Gloucester bids Edgar go into the hovel :—

In, fellow, there, into the hovel : keep thee warm—

Lear follows him, saying :—

Come, let's in all.

These last words are translated into Italian, “Zitti andiamo tutti”—“Let us all go”. Acting on this, Signor Rossi, instead of attempting feebly to follow Edgar, turns in the very direction in which Gloucester strives vainly to entice him. Quite useless is it to multiply instances of faults of omission and commission. From the Shakespearian standpoint, Signor Rossi's *Lear* is an admirable piece of acting, informed by no soul.

MADAME JANAUSCHEK's performance of *Mary Stuart* exhibits the extent and the limits of her powers. She is an actress of highest mark. In the supreme and seldom-scaled heights of her art, she stands above all living rivals. Her acting is, however, intense rather than sympathetic, and it impresses where it seeks to win. She has little pathos and some mannerism. Most of the highest gifts of the actress are, however, hers, including the power of animating with human passion the merest outline of a character that is supplied her. This faculty is exhibited in a slight after-piece, in which she has appeared, the object of which is to show how many varieties of expression the actress can force into the two words—“Come here”. The “*Mary Stuart*” in which Madame Janauschek appeared is an American rendering of the French version of Schiller, in which Rachel made, in Liége, her first appearance in the character. It preserves the scene of the

meeting of the Queens, probably the most dramatic situation in Schiller. Madame Janauschek's demonstration of concealed envy and reserved force in this scene are beyond praise: the final outbreak is magnificent. It is a discouraging reflection that acting so unrivalled as this has been exhibited in London with so conspicuous a want of success, that the actress has not even been able to play for the short period of twelve nights originally assigned her. Yet, if ever redemption from the vulgarities of modern taste is to reach us, it should be by means of some such artist as we now send away with the reputation of failure. Not large is the supply of such, however, and so costly a luxury as rejecting a Janauschek cannot be obtained every year.

SIGNOR Rossi's *Macbeth* is a broader as well as a more elaborate performance than his *Lear*. In all respects except one it conveys the conception of the character now prevalent. Macbeth is the sport of supernatural agencies. To the support and encouragement afforded him by the witches he is indebted for his capacity to shape and carry out the schemes which end in his exaltation. The price demanded for the service rendered is his soul—the customary fee for similar aid. None the less clear and evident is the transaction that the terms are not stated, and no formal compact is made. When Macbeth seeks a second time the witches, he is as completely the slave of the infernal powers as Faustus, who by solemn ceremonies has conjured the fiend into his presence, and demanded of him the gifts man ordinarily covets. There seems, however, to be a pre-existent knowledge on the part of the supernatural beings in whose behalf it avails to

raise such artificial sprites
As by the strength of their illusion
Shall draw him on to his confusion.

These "supernatural solicitings" are not intended for Banquo, in whom they raise no mad ambitions. They are thus, in one respect, a creation of the mind of Macbeth. Given, as existent somewhere in the world, the witches, their appearance and their active discharge of their functions are contingent upon the discovery of human baseness sufficient to set them in motion. They are, in fact, the machine to which human passion supplies the motive force. Unless an actor were capable of charging a nod with all the significance supposed to be possessed by that of Lord Burleigh, it would be too much to expect of him that he should exhibit such growth of ambition in the mind of Macbeth as revealed to the weird sisters his fitness for the purposes they had continually in view. Signor Rossi, however, indicates more clearly than any previous actor that absorption of mind which comes of the conviction that you are under demoniac influences. His look is that of one under a spell of glamour which weighs upon him, and can only be momentarily dispelled by violent action, ordinarily of a kind likely to produce a return of the fit under aggravated conditions. This, so far as it goes, is excellent. Instead of leading, however, to the defeat and desolation which come of the conviction that, at a sacrifice of highest interests, a purchase has been made of a mere show of empire, it serves as a stimulus to Macbeth in the later scenes. His fight with Macduff has the recklessness and desperation that come of mental hopelessness and physical defeat. During the early scenes, however, the bearing of Macbeth is haughty and defiant, and there are few traces of such moral and intellectual collapse as are exhibited in the lines commencing

Out, out, brief candle !

and in other passages. The performance is, however, the most interesting and suggestive Signor Rossi has yet given.

The *Lady Macbeth* of Signora Pareti was commendable in the early acts, but disappointing in the sleep-walking scene.

SIGNOR SALVINI has reappeared in London in the character in which he first obtained the suffrages of the English public. His *Othello* retains its old virtues and defects. It still borders upon extravagance in the details of certain scenes, and remains in the last act daringly defiant of Shakspeare's avowed intention. Its old empire over the emotions is also maintained, and it rests one of the broadest, most finished, and most powerful impersonations the stage has ever seen. The reason, we are told, why Signor Salvini presents Othello as cutting his throat in the last act, instead of stabbing himself, as the text directs, is because Moors wear none except curved weapons, and are more given to cut than to smite. In a modern piece, in which local colour is all important, attention to detail would be laudable. In the case of Shakspeare, however, such improvements are worse than needless—they are annoying. Shakspeare's *Moor*, it should be observed, is a renegade, fighting against the armies of the Believers. If strict attention were paid to accuracy of detail, he should wear the dress of a Venetian general, and should carry no trace of Moorish appearance. For the sake of picturesqueness, and also to single out the Moor from his surroundings, he is presented as wearing Eastern dress. In Venetian garments he would only look like a swarthy Italian. The attempt to improve upon Shakspeare's intention is one which, under whatever guise it may present itself, or from whatever source it may come, Englishmen must resent. The innovation made in the scene by Signor Salvini constitutes a blot upon an otherwise magnificent performance.

SIGNOR Rossi's successive performances reveal no new phase of talent, and strengthen the impression at first produced, that he is great as an executant rather than as an interpreter. It is not easy by any single word or short phrase even to indicate the chief defect in his acting. Just, however, as a brilliant vocalist, with magnificent voice and powers of execution that laugh at difficulties, may sing a well-known air without conveying the sentiment of the composer, so an actor may give us a specimen, fine in itself, of a certain order of histrionic abilities, without realising the characters he essays. This is precisely what Signor Rossi does. His *Romeo* is a marvellously fine piece of acting; and some of its touches are absolutely superb. It is, however, pervaded and animated by no great conception that the audience is able to grasp. When Romeo first sees Juliet, and is conquered and spell-bound by her beauty; when, to use a hackneyed comparison, like the needle turning to the pole, his gaze

Trembles and trembles into certainty;

when, so absorbed as to be practically irresponsible for his actions, he receives her low obeisance without realising that he is called upon to acknowledge it; and when, watching her departure, he stands like one in whom sudden shock has arrested the springs of life, conception, and execution,—are alike perfect, and Romeo stands before us. When, however, obedient to stage directions, he kisses her fully on the mouth, he has gained assurance, and is no longer the timid and reverential, if passionate lover, but a gay and venturesome gallant. When leaving Juliet's presence the true Romeo again presents himself, not, however, to reappear. Not Romeo was that ardent cavalier who, beneath his mistress's balcony, and in the liquid moonlight, kissed the scarf she let down to him, as though, like the hair of Rapunzel, its flimsy folds could

prove a ladder for his feet. Why not? it may be asked. The action is natural, as it may be. His mistress's scarf, her glove, the flower from her bosom, the ribbon from her hair, the very stone her foot has pressed, a lover will fondle and caress. Romeo in Signor Rossi's hands is, however, too self-possessedly certain. He is not under the spell of that rapture of new life which comes to youth with the first knowledge that it is loved. He kisses with assurance, he is rhetorical in speech, and his passion only manifests its excess by discounting, as it were, in imagination, the happiness in store. Lacking these qualities of juvenility and timorousness which conflict with passion, the balcony scenes lose their poetry. From this moment until the closing action Romeo remained rhetorical. There was no despairing self-communion upon his receipt of the news of Juliet's death. The description of the apothecary was spoken to an audience supposed to be interested in particulars which were confided to it. The one fine point obtained resulted from a violation, not to be too harshly judged, of Shakspeare's text. Garrick's version of "Romeo and Juliet"—which would have held longer its position as the acting version, but for the fact that the play has always, during late years, been produced by women, to whom the alterations it makes bring no advantage, and who, consequently, earn cheaply the reputation of restoring an original text—was performed. In this, Juliet awakes before Romeo is dead. While, accordingly, Romeo is yielding to the effect of the poison, Juliet, half unconsciously, steps from the tomb, and, calling faintly on Father Laurence and her husband, walks into the church-yard. Slowly Romeo then pulls himself to the tomb, intending to die beside his love. He finds it empty. Dazed and bewildered he turns his head and sees Juliet, in her grave-clothes, stealing through the grounds. His consternation is appalling. Mastering by one supreme effort the tortures that rend him, he approaches with awe

what he believes the wraith of his mistress, until sight, hearing, and other senses are convinced it is she herself, when he strains her in a rapturous embrace, from which he drops back dead. The manner in which the stage is filled by this picture of Romeo's dismay and consternation shows how profound a mastery of art Signor Rossi possesses. In case of an effect so tremendous it seems almost unworthy to point out that this one supreme effect is obtained by the presentation of a character that is not Romeo, in a scene that is not Shakspeare.

June 17, 1876. THE failure of "*L'Étrangère*" at the Haymarket seems to dispose of the question whether the kind of comedy which meets with warmest acceptance in France is suited to English tastes. As the latest and most characteristic work of the leader of the new school of French dramatic fiction, "*L'Étrangère*" is a representative play. It exhibits, moreover, in a high degree those qualities which distinguish the school of to-day from that of yesterday. The social problem it illustrates is treated with a frankness and sincerity almost brutal; the vices, real or supposed, of society are laid bare with a scientific composure worthy of Balzac; and the strange moral it enforces is urged with a relentlessness and an energy which recall John Knox, fulminating against Court follies and Court intrigues. No attempt is made to preserve the brilliancy of dialogue which has been an aim of dramatists since the days of Molière in France and of Congreve in England. Dramatic incisiveness is sought rather than dramatic sparkle, and a *finesse* in speech is cultivated such as can only succeed when delivered by actors capable of seizing upon every hint of the author, to a public on the watch for obscure allusion and remote illustration. Against work of this class, every form of English conviction and prejudice stands arrayed. The world

“L’Étrangère” depicts is, to the English playgoer, as imaginary as any Arcadia or Utopia poet or statesman has feigned; the motives to action seem less inadequate than unreal, the dramatic situations are inconceivable, and the moral teaching is strained and perverse. Add to this that our actors are accustomed to broad effects, and know little of the *nuances* upon which the success of French comedy depends, and that our audiences prefer in dialogue the broad-sword, or even the quarter-staff, to the rapier, and it will be seen that an adaptation like that of “L’Étrangère” is heavily handicapped. The progress of the piece accordingly elicited constant signs of dissatisfaction, and the close brought with it a weight of condemnation rarely witnessed in late years.

As an element in the significance of this verdict, it must be remembered that the play is mounted with the taste that has placed the Haymarket under the present management in the front rank of London theatres, and is acted by a company which is second to none.

The apparent aim of “L’Étrangère” is to show the evil of those *mariages de convenance* which prevail in France and are not unknown in this country. This well-worn moral is, however, enforced by means of a story which repels at every step. That English society might furnish scandals as grave as those M. Dumas depicts is probable enough. The mistake M. Dumas makes is to present the exceptional as the common. No social lesson can possibly be taught by a single instance of a crime not likely to be repeated. A story such as that of Beatrice Cenci is available for the dramatist who endeavours to depict tragic situation, and may be of some value to the moralist who strives to show the possible developments of human wickedness. It is valueless, however, for the purpose of social lessons, and he who seeks to warn men against a repetition of the offence is about as wise as the man who strives to vend in London

streets medicines against the plague, or remedies against snake-bites.

We see in “*L’Étrangère*” a husband compelling his wife to receive a stranger whom he seeks to make his mistress; a woman of unknown antecedents winning her way by payment into the salons of one of the leaders of French aristocracy; a duchess returning the visit of a stranger whose acquaintance is gravely compromising, and then accepting from her a challenge to fight *à outrance* for the possession of a youth who is a *prétendant* to one and an object of envy to the other. In its course a wife avows to her husband her hatred for him and her love for another; the husband retorts by endeavouring to fix upon the wife the responsibility of an offence of which he knows her to be innocent. He then, while plotting the death of his rival in a duel, seeks to be provided with double chances of vengeance, and make his possible death as certain a source of danger and trouble to his wife as his victory. Not one spark of honesty or decency is there to be found in the play, not one respectable emotion or natural instinct is aroused. A father sells his daughter, the price being a title. So soon, however, as the transaction is accomplished, he turns upon his son-in-law, and becomes the second of his adversary in a duel to the death.

A scientific physician advocates views upon marriage that may some day find acceptance, but for which the world is as yet unprepared; the Duke behaves to his wife like a scoundrel, the Duchess preserves her honour at the sacrifice of her modesty. Wherever we turn all is arid. The very springs of nature are dried up, and the world is a desert without a single oasis. These faults might be pardoned if the result obtained were in any strong sense dramatic. There is, however, no such lesson upon the results of unbridled power as gives intensity to “*Le Roi s’Amuse*,” no such conflict of passion as purifies and ele-

vates "Marion Delorme". Explanations are prolonged until they become wearisome, action is frittered away until, as in the case of a river flowing to the sea through various channels, all sense of grandeur or dignity, or even of size, is lost. When at length, after many delays, some dramatic heat is engendered, it is at once dissipated. The revenge of the American, who, in a fit of virtuous indignation, insists upon fighting himself a man who seeks him as a second, provides a *dénouement* which is at once extravagant and conventional, extravagant in the particulars but conventional *au fond*. The effect upon the audience of the famous speech to the Duchess, telling her the issue of the encounter with her husband—"You are a widow" (*Vous êtes veuve*), was to produce a shock uncomfortable or ridiculous, according to the feelings of the individual.

Grave as are the defects of the piece, it is none the less a fair specimen of the class to which it belongs. Its dialogue in the original has a crispness and subtlety which English words fail to convey, and which go far towards redeeming the unpleasantness of the story. Its extravagances, moreover, are generic rather than individual. Its fate in England even might have been different, had the public been more familiar with the kind of investigation it pursues, and had the actors been more capable of giving effect to the language. Unfortunately for its chances, the kind of acting it demands in the female characters is exactly that Englishwomen cannot supply. Miss Hodson, as the Duchess, and Miss Barry, as the American, did their best, but failed to present that mixture of refinement and insolence which both characters exact. Miss Hodson, moreover, miscalculated the powers of her voice, and strained it to a point at which it passed altogether out of her control. It is cruel, indeed, to call upon actresses who are admirable in one line to take up another which is wholly outside their powers. Mr. Vezin gave an excellent

interpretation of the *Duke*. It had none of the sliminess which a less competent artist might import, as typical of low moral sense, but was dignified throughout. Accustomed to subserviency *quand même*, and satiated with homage, the Duke avows frankly the delinquencies he has ceased to regard as such, and does not for one moment conceive himself open to the charges which the American brings against him. Mr. Vezin's disguise was admirable, his conception was the highest that could be taken, and his rendering of it was faultless. Mr. Conway sustained thoroughly the small part of the lover. Mr. Harcourt was the American. Other parts were so antipathetic to the audience, that it is doubtful if any acting could have rendered them acceptable.

AMONG the comedies of a past age which, occasionally revived, serve to remind us how far we have fallen from the times of Gentleman Lewis or of Charles Kemble, is the "Belle's Stratagem" of Mrs. Cowley. It is a clever, busy, and entertaining play, and reflects no small credit upon the bright little Devonshire lady, who in middle life developed an unsuspected and unmistakable capacity for dramatic work. While laughing at the raptures of contemporary criticism, which declared the heroine so marvellous a character that "were Venus and Minerva to make a descent to the earth, their united powers would be requisite to its perfect exhibition," we must admit that Letitia is a thoroughly natural and attractive personage, who maintains a strong hold on our sympathies through a series of amusing if not too probable adventures. There is genuine spirit in the conduct of the intrigue, and more than one of the male characters, Dericourt especially, is lifelike and natural.

A performance of the comedy can accordingly be wit-

nessed with pleasure. During recent days the "Belle's Stratagem" has been rarely seen in London, the revival at the St. James's, by Miss Herbert, nine years ago, when Mr. Irving made his *début* in the part of Doriancourt, being the only representation a playgoer of moderate experience can recall. It has now, in an abridged version, with the excision of the intrigue of Courtall and Kitty Willis, the latter of whom entirely disappears, and the omission of other characters, including the French valet, originally played by Wewitzer, been produced at the Lyceum. The experiment can scarcely be called successful. Miss Isabel Bateman's *Letitia Hardy* has some gaiety and archness, but the performance wants distinction. It is told of Miss Younge, the original Letitia, in the Preface to the printed play, that she was always too much agitated to repress her tears in the last scene, in which she takes off her mask, and discovers herself to the husband she has plotted so ingeniously to secure. The situation thus obtained is, indeed, so striking, it seldom fails to elicit a warm burst of applause from the audience. This was not wanting on the present occasion. Throughout, indeed, the performance proved sympathetic to an audience which has lost all remembrance of acting in high comedy. Miss Isabel Bateman's impersonation was the only thing in the performance calling for notice. Miss Lucy Buckstone gave a pleasant picture of *Lady Frances*, reduced in the present version to a nonentity. Miss Virginia Francis, as *Mrs. Racket*, and Mr. Carton, as *Villiers*, steered clear of vulgarity or extravagance. The other characters, from the leading personages downwards, were caricatures. Mr. Irving has gone grievously astray since he first appeared as *Doriancourt*, and won the unanimous approval of the press and the public. Gradually, as he has played parts such as Mathias, in the "Bells," the intensity of which prevails through its extravagance, he has acquired mannerisms which now eat him up. So far from

resembling a beau of the last century, his Dericourt scarcely remains within the framework of comedy. In appearance and walk it is less Dericourt than Pangloss. The walk is stiff, strained, and impossible. Two or three steps, a halt, and a run, succeed each other, the whole effect being that of a man who, so to speak, stammers in his gait.

In the conception of the character of Letitia Hardy, Mrs. Cowley appears to have been indebted to the "Fausse Agnès" of Destouches, who, in order to avoid a marriage with a country pedant, adopts a stratagem similar to that which furnishes its name to the English comedy. The "Fausse Agnès" contains also a scene of counterfeit insanity akin to that of Dericourt. In the French, however, it is the heroine and not the hero who shams madness. It is scarcely likely that Mrs. Cowley was acquainted with Destouches, and it is more probable she took the idea of her heroine from the "Citizen" of Arthur Murphy, a dull and vulgar imitation of an excellent comedy. It is curious, as showing how few genuinely original characters serve for dramatic purposes, and how small is the stock-in-trade of the dramatist, that Angélique, the "Fausse Agnès" of Destouches, is herself an imitation of Agathe in the "Folies Amoureuses" of Regnard. From what Spanish or Italian source Regnard drew the conception remains to be discovered.

CHAPTER IX.

St. James's: "*Les Danicheff par Pierre Newski*".—Hay-market: "*Dan'l Druce, Blacksmith*," by W. Gilbert.—Queen's: "*King Henry the Fifth*".—Drury Lane: "*King Richard the Third*," altered from Shakspeare by Colley Cibber.

THE success of "*Les Danicheff*," in France first, and June 24, 1876, now in England, shows that what prejudice exists in both countries against pieces in which the plot is hampered by details of life and customs in remote or half-civilised regions is due rather to the clumsy workmanship of those who have dealt with such subjects than to the subjects themselves. Unlike those dramas illustrative of Russian life, which, since the success of "*Elizabeth; or, the Exiles of Siberia*," have appeared upon the stage, "*Les Danicheff*" is sincere in workmanship, free from over-sentimentality, and free also from that exhibition of one-sided sympathy to be expected in plays in which class is arrayed against class. Its plot describes the difficulties of a Russian nobleman, seeking to marry one of his serfs, and finding in his mother an unscrupulous adversary, who, during his absence, does not hesitate by the power the law assigns her to compel the girl on whom his choice has fallen to wed a man in her own station. That the lovers are in the end united is due to the self-abnegation of the serf thus unceremoniously married. Though loving the girl with all his soul, the husband respects her sorrow, abandons all claim to her possession, consents to a divorce, and, when such relief is shown to be impossible by ordinary means, takes upon himself monastic vows, accepting thus a distasteful

profession and a life of celibacy in order that the woman he loves and has espoused may become the wife of another. Such devotion, it may be urged, is impossible. It is at least certain that the pleasure of the spectator is marred by the fact that the one thoroughly noble and disinterested being in the play is condemned to defeat and despair. A powerful and, in the main, sympathetic story is, however, obtained with due regard to the relation of noble and serf, and no such avoidance of the difficulty is encountered as disfigures Mr. Taylor's drama, "The Serf," in which the supposed victim of aristocratic cruelty and aggression is in the end shown to be no slave, but a young nobleman, stolen in infancy, and brought up in ignorance of his origin. The picture of Russian life the piece affords adds greatly to its interest; and the view of the interior of a château, with the Countess surrounded by her dependants and parasites, is as faithful as a Teniers, and as finished as a Meissonier.

There is dramatic power in the play, and some of the situations are both novel and impressive. It is, however, an element of weakness that the first act is the best, that some of the business which follows is conventional, and that the delay in the divorce, which adds a fourth act, though it augments the interest felt in the serf-husband, and, by revealing an operation of Russian law unknown to most inhabitants of Western Europe, furnishes an unexpected *dénouement*, is really an unnecessary prolongation of the story and postponement of an end seen to be inevitable. To these observations upon the play, which do not pretend to amount to a full estimate of its merits and its defects, may be added that portions of the dialogue, which has been polished by M. Dumas, are in the best style of that master of dramatic epigram, and that there is an absence of baseness of motive, as of "unblest" speculation, which, in the case of a piece with the hall-mark of French manufacture still warm, is sufficiently noteworthy.

Whatever may be the opinion concerning the piece now transferred from the boards of the Odéon to those of the St. James's, there can scarcely be two opinions as to the acting of the company which, for the first time, in something like its integrity, visits England. No man like the one or two leading artists of the Comédie Française may be found in the company at the second Théâtre Français. Scarcely inferior to that of the Comédie is, however, the standard of the Odéon, and the representations it gives are worthy of the highest consideration of lovers of art. In Mdlle. Hélène Petit it has an artist whose one fault—a slight inaccuracy or imperfection in the delivery of French, which care and study have almost removed—is scarcely perceptible to English ears; and in M. Marais, a youth who carried off the prizes of comedy and tragedy at a late *concours* of the Conservatoire, it possesses a *jeune premier* full of *fougue* and passion. The scenes between these artists were admirably played, and the outburst by Mdlle. Petit, upon receiving the order to marry her fellow-servant, was one of the most harrowing expressions of grief ever heard upon the stage. Madame Fargueil, who enacted the Dowager Countess for the first time, is an incomparable artist, and her presentation of aristocratic reserve and her repression of feeling were perfect. MM. Porel, Masset, and Montbars, and Mdlle. Antonine showed themselves up to the level of their reputations, and acted with admirable conscientiousness and success. Each picture, indeed, was alike fine. More noticeable, however, than the beauty of separate impersonations was the *ensemble*. The entire action had unsurpassable ease. The effect upon the spectator unaccustomed to such exhibitions even in those London theatres in which a conscientious effort is made after this form of excellence is to leave an impression that it is necessary to witness from time to time some representation of the kind, not only to keep up the standard of acting in the mind, but to vindicate the claim of acting to rank as art.

Sept. 16, 1874. It scarcely detracts from Mr. Gilbert's claim to originality, to assert that his drama of "Dan'l Druce, Blacksmith," recalls many previous works. If originality is only to be accorded those who are altogether independent of their predecessors, it must be denied a host of writers, commencing with Boccaccio, and including Shakspeare, Molière, and Goethe. It has been maintained that a story belongs rather to the man who turns it to best account, than to him who first employs it; and it is certainly a defensible assertion that those dramatists who have taken most from other sources have done the best work. Invention itself is as rare a gift as dramatic perception, and the two are seldom found in conjunction. The dramatist, then, with whom invention is not superabundant, may do well to draw upon accumulated stores of intrigue and incident, instead of cudgelling his brains to produce new combinations. A rather strange medley of works is suggested by the new drama. The leading idea, that of masculine hard-heartedness subjugated by infantine innocence or virginal purity, animates a score of works between the "Ursule Mirouet" of Balzac and Bret Harte's "Luck of Roaring Camp". "Timon of Athens" suggests the opening situation; that which follows is taken from "Silas Marner"; while the antagonism of classes, the seduction by a man of position and fashion of the wife of a blacksmith, have been anticipated in "Used Up". Besides these resemblances, and others which are more remote, there is a certain measure of that form of plagiarism most pardonable in an author—imitation of his own previous works. Dorothy, Mr. Gilbert's youthful and very attractive heroine, has some likeness to those types of superhuman innocence and purity he has drawn from fairy legend.

So purely domestic is the interest of the play, there is no obvious reason for giving it the historical background Mr. Gilbert has assigned it. A certain appearance of in-

sincerity must always attend effort to reproduce the life of past ages. Mr. Gilbert is too thorough an artist to fall into the mistake of attempting to restore the exact phraseology of our ancestors. A certain kind of instinct appears to guide all writers who have obtained success in the attempt to deal with the life of past epochs. Influenced by this, they give a conventional tone of antiquity rather than a reproduction. This is altogether in accordance with the precedent of the stage, whereon all things have to be judged from a standard impossible in real life ; and calculations have to be based upon the supposition that an action will be seen framed as in a picture. The characters accordingly talk so as to be completely intelligible to modern ears, while an antiquated air is still communicated to their speech. In one case only does Mr. Gilbert attempt an absolute imitation of the language of the seventeenth century. In *Reuben Haines*, a Cavalier sergeant, it is sought to exhibit a type of the swash-buckler, roistering, licentious, pragmatical, full of airs, and ever ready with a quip. The language used by this character has thus a stamp of antiquity not elsewhere to be found.

The story leans to situations which, in spite of an appearance of strength, cannot be said to possess any true dramatic grip. The chief grace of the play is in one or two very tender and idyllic passages of love-making introduced into the second act. What interest attends the later scenes makes strong demands upon the readiness of the spectator to be deceived, seeing that a misunderstanding between the lovers, which forms the basis, could not in the world of absolute fact have remained a moment without explanation. The same charge may be advanced against some of the greatest plays the world has seen. By the exercise of a very small amount of common-sense, *Othello* would have broken through the flimsy, if fatal, web in which Iago had wrapped him. In "*Dan'l Druce*" Mr. Gilbert has attempted a more elaborate study of

human nature than he has previously essayed. Soured by the loss of his wife and child, the former of whom has eloped with an aristocratic lover, the blacksmith, under an assumed name, has gone to reside in a lonely and wind-rocked cabin on the Norfolk coast. Here he has hardened into a species of miser. Not wholly debased is his nature. He loves his gold as though it were the work of his hands, and, like a second Pygmalion, wishes that his statue would start into life. His desire, absurd as it seems, is answered. A Cavalier officer, hard pressed in his attempt to escape from the result of Worcester's fight, takes his gold, and leaves him a child three years of age. Accepting a boon which he rightly judges heaven-sent, Druce rears the little stranger, and loves her as his own flesh and blood. He is of course tortured by the fear that she may be reclaimed. She is faithful to him, however, and is in the end proved to be his own child, the offspring of the wife who had quitted his roof. With the development of this character Mr. Gilbert has taken much pains. The change of nature produced by the presence of the girl is carefully depicted, until we see the hard heart completely subjugated by the gentle hand. Some such ascendancy of childhood over the manhood which prepares its way is indicated in "*Macbeth*," where the appearance of the armed head is followed by that of the child—an apparition which the first witch pronounces "more potent than the first". Full justice was done to this conception by Mr. Vezin, who acted with much earnestness and passion, and in the scenes in which he defended his treasure produced a powerful effect upon the audience. The love-scenes of the second act were finely presented by Miss Marion Terry and Mr. Forbes Robertson. Miss Terry's quietude of manner, and her apparent insensibility to the significance of the rough wooing of the Cavalier soldier, Haines, were excellent. Mr. Odell has a strong sense of burlesque humour, but carries his impersonations into caricature.

His acting in *Reuben Haines* was equally droll and extravagant.

“Dan'l Druce” obtained a favourable reception. It adds nothing to Mr. Gilbert’s intellectual stature; but it is different from anything he has done, and it is not unworthy of his reputation.

FEW of the historical plays of Shakspeare have been so Sept. 23, 1876. seldom seen on the stage as “Henry the Fifth”. To its failure to secure a hold upon the public may be attributed the facts that it has been the subject of more experiments than any other Shakspearian drama, and has a history so curious as to be worth recalling. Betterton produced, in 1664, at Lincoln’s Inn Fields the “Henry the Fifth” of the Earl of Orrery, a piece differing in many respects from that of Shakspeare, and played in it Owen Glendower. Garrick, in 1747, gave Shakspeare’s play, and, resigning to Barry the part of Henry, contented himself with that of the Chorus. Kemble, in 1789, enacted Henry, and was succeeded in it, in 1819, by Macready. In 1830, “Henry the Fifth” was chosen for what proved to be the last attempt of Edmund Kean to present a Shakspearian character. He failed utterly, broke down, and apologised to the audience for his inadequacy. Mr. Phelps included “Henry the Fifth” in the noteworthy series of revivals which distinguished his management of Sadler’s Wells. Treading in his father’s footsteps, Charles Kean gave, in 1859, at the Princess’s, “Henry the Fifth” as his last Shakspearian production. The chief novelty consisted in converting the Chorus into a woman, and assigning the character to Mrs. Kean. Now at last, when the piece is again revived, a fresh experiment is made, and Mr. Phelps, instead of playing Henry the Fifth, appears as Henry the Fourth in a portion of the “Second Part of Henry the Fourth,” which, in the shape of a Prologue, is united to the play.

It is hopeless to fight the battle of fidelity to the text of Shakspeare. Colley Cibber's "Richard the Third" has driven the original play out of the field. Managers will tell you, in answer to remonstrance, that, while a fair chance of success attends a production of Cibber's version, the play as Shakspeare wrote it has never, since the Restoration, proved other than a failure. At present, accordingly, those who wish to see Shakspeare on the stage must resign themselves to take what they can get, a lesson the less difficult as there are no actors fit to speak the words of Shakspeare were they in every case restored. Against the proceeding adopted by Mr. Coleman, however, a protest may be lodged upon the ground of expediency as well as that of justice to an author. From the latter point of view, it is treating a dramatist but scurvily to assume that what he intended for the climax of one play can be converted into the opening scenes of another; from the former, a mistake is made in commencing with elaborate scenes of decay and death a drama the whole spirit of which is action. It is doubtful even whether the advantage of including Mr. Phelps in the cast will compensate for the feeling of weariness and depression that is stirred by the funereal gloom of the opening situations.

Against the pageantry introduced, little can be urged under existing conditions. In the historical plays it is easy and pardonable to assist the spectator by presenting him with a species of panorama of the events which furnish a background to the action. That Shakspeare would have accepted a certain measure of scenic display as an aid appears from his Prologue, wherein he asks the spectators to

Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts ;
Into a thousand parts divide one man,
And make imaginary puissance :
Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth.

So far, then, as it is good—and some of it *is* good—the pageantry introduced into the play is pardonable. The ballets even, which provoked a storm of disapproval, might be justified from the standpoint now accepted with regard to Shakspearian representations. To receive with a masque Henry the Fifth returning with his French bride from his marriage in Troyes is a notion that Shakspeare himself would not have scouted, and to give an emblematical ballet in the presence of Charles the Sixth is an idea not so especially ridiculous as to merit the stern and almost savage condemnation it received. These views must be taken as applicable only to the existing condition of affairs. If we had actors capable of giving with perfect delivery and fitting accompaniment of action the speeches Shakspeare has written, and a public willing to accept an entertainment of the class thus formed, we should be sticklers for it. In the absence of both we take what we can get, so long as it is moderately good in its class. The outcry about burying Shakspeare beneath upholstery has not much meaning. If we had actors who could render the great Shakspearian creations, they would not be buried. It is the dimensions of the men, not those of the ornamentation, that are responsible for the feeling evoked. In France the Government accords certain theatres a subvention, on the express condition that it shall play a certain number of pieces belonging to the classic drama. Without such aid, the French public would see little of Molière, and less of Racine and Corneille. In place of such assistance, English managers have turned to spectacular effects, and out of the taste of the public for display have gained money that enables them to keep Shakspeare, in a fashion, on the stage. The question, whether it is worth while to present him at all in the manner in which he is now seen, remains in abeyance.

No purpose is answered by describing at length the manner in which the play has been broken to pieces and

reshaped. Some of the alterations are absurd enough ; in favour of others something might perhaps be advanced. To the majority of the audience the play is wholly spectacle, and Shakspeare's words might almost be regarded as a species of incidental music. Much of the spectacle is good, though the brightness of the dresses and the armour destroys the *vraisemblance*, and leaves the impression that we are contemplating a waxwork exhibition arranged so as to present an imitation of action.

In very few of the characters was there anything to call for favourable comment. In the part of the boy who waits upon Bardolph and his associates, Miss Kate Phillips was excellent. Miss Fowler exhibited, as *Katharine of Valois*, a mixture of coquetry and timidity, which was thoroughly natural and appropriate. Mr. Phelps gave the dying speeches of *Henry the Fourth* in his usual manner. It is a difficult task for an artist, however competent, to obtain strong effects when he is perpetually recumbent, and has always to speak with the voice of a moribund. It is different when the decline is gradual, and weakness in the last scenes can be contrasted with comparative strength in those which precede. Mr. Coleman, who played *Henry the Fifth*, was wrong in his method. His lightness was too *debonair*, and his changes of voice and action were too frequent and too marked. Mr. Ryder doubled the part of *Sir William Gascoyne* in the Prologue, and *Williams* in the play, and spoke with a clearness of utterance the younger actors might do well to copy. In the subordinate parts, the incapacity to deliver a line of blank verse, usually displayed on similar occasions, was painfully obvious. Miss Leighton, as the Prologue, spoke with clearness and effect, but was unnecessarily vehement. A lighter and less tragic tone would have been more effective.

OF the numerous alterations or imitations of Shakespeare by Davenant, Dryden, Cibber, Garrick, and meaner writers, one alone has retained possession of the stage. This, however, has enjoyed a fortune so exceptional, it has all but driven from the field the work on which it is founded. When, at Covent Garden in 1821, Macready produced the "Richard the Third" of Shakspeare, that play was for the first time since the Restoration set before the public. Betterton, after his wont, ignored Shakspeare, and when he appeared as Richard did so in a rhymed play called "The English Princess," the author of which, Caryl, was secretary to Mary, wife of James the Second, during her residence abroad, and was better known in letters in consequence of having furnished Pope with the idea of "The Rape of the Lock". Garrick, not too correctly announced as "A Gentleman who never appeared on any Stage," made, in 1741, at the theatre in Goodman's Fields, his first essay in London in the part of Richard the Third. The play in which he appeared was Colley Cibber's adaptation. Half-a-century later another actor of reputation, G. F. Cooke, made his *début* in the same character. In this part, first played by Cibber himself, Ryan, Quin, Barry, Smith, Henderson, Kemble, and Pope were seen in turns, and in it Kean electrified the public. So firm was its hold and so strong the belief in its superiority to Shakspeare, that Charles Kean, with many apologies, selected it, in 1854, for production at the Princess's. Fortune or popular favour was, indeed, on its side. Macready's revival at Covent Garden of Shakspeare was a failure, the piece being withdrawn after two representations. The success obtained by Mr. Phelps at Sadler's Wells was not able to turn the tide of public opinion, and when, in the present year, "Richard the Third" is revived as the opening attraction of Drury Lane, the version given is that of Cibber.

Quite time is it this state of affairs should come to an

end. Neither in dramatic value, in appropriateness, in sequence, nor in any dramatic or poetical quality whatever, can Cibber's play compete with Shakspeare's. It is, indeed, a species of dramatic hodge-podge, containing scenes and passages from "Richard the Second," "Henry the Fourth," Part II., "Henry the Fifth," and all three parts of "Henry the Sixth," arranged with little regard to character, and supplemented by verses of Cibber's own. Its popularity is chiefly ascribable to the familiarity of the public with certain lines, such as "Off with his head.—So much for Buckingham!" and "Conscience, avaunt! Richard's himself again," with the value of which actors are profoundly impressed. Until recent years brought with them a study of Shakspeare closer and more reverential than had previously been attempted, these and other lines passed with ninety-nine readers out of a hundred for Shakspeare's. Against the credit, whatever that may be, to which Cibber is entitled for their authorship, may be placed the fact that he disfigured Shakspeare's text with such passages as Gloucester's address to Buckingham *à propos* to the contemplated murder of the children:—

I tell thee, Cuz, I've lately had two spiders
Crawling upon my startled hopes—
Now, tho' thy friendly hand has brushed 'em from me,
Yet still they crawl offensive to my eyes ;
I wou'd have some kind friend to tread upon 'em.

Or his instructions to Tyrrel after the murder is accomplished:—

I have it—I'll have 'em sure—get me a coffin
Full of holes ; let 'em both be crammed into it ;
And, hark thee, in the night tide throw 'em down
The Thames—once in, they'll find their way to the bottom.

It may, perhaps, be urged that, so long as the present condition of affairs exists, so long as the resources of our

stage remain what they now are, and so long as the historical plays are mere backgrounds for pageantry, Cibber's version may as well be employed as Shakspeare's. In this there is some show of reason. While, however, no attempt is made to give Shakspeare, no improvement can be hoped either from the spread of intelligence among actors or the zeal of those whom the maltreatment of Shakspeare offends. From any tragic standpoint Cibber's "Richard" is absurd, if not absolutely contemptible. The manner in which the murders are crowded into so brief a space of time ends by creating amusement. Richard is a monster of villainy, whose actions illustrate no conceivable state of mind. It may be advanced by the defenders of Cibber, if such exist, that the introduction of the murder of Henry the Sixth is more than compensated for by the omission of those of Clarence, Hastings, and other victims of Richard's policy. This, however, is not quite true. Henry is murdered by Richard with his own hands, and the spectacle of the violent action causes a far stronger effect than that of the results of his sanguinary policy when others are the agents. At the close of "Henry the Sixth," Richard's deed furnishes a termination to the play, and supplies a lurid portent of the coming horrors of his own reign. Where now placed, its effect is little short of fatal. It is, at least, certain that the audience grew at last to treat the play as a burlesque, and greeted each successive atrocity of Richard with a laugh. An actor such as Kean might, by his power, conquer all feeling of this kind. Such actors, however, are not now to be had. Those to whom the principal parts are now assigned are painstaking and earnest. Here praise must stop. Mrs. Vezin displays genuine power as *Queen Elizabeth*, and Mr. Cathcart, who plays *Henry the Sixth*, shows that he has studied in a good school. In the other characters we find a style of acting which has nothing in common with the views of art now commencing to prevail.

Mr. Sullivan has formed a conception of the character very like that of Cooke as we read of it in Leigh Hunt, and accentuates the banter of Richard until we fancy the man gloating in the enjoyment of his own hypocrisy. Here is *a* view of the character, and, as Cibber has depicted it, as defensible a view as another. Points that display thought and reading, moreover, are not wanting. The execution, however, has a violence that can never be intense, and the performance throughout of all the characters misses the true tragic note.

The spectacular portion of the entertainment is excellent. In addition to the clever pictures Mr. Beverly has painted of Bosworth Field, the Tower, Old St. Paul's, and other spots, we are presented with heraldic devices and emblazonments, armour, primitive weapons, and other like details, all of which have obviously been produced under careful supervision. No drama of the class has recently been mounted at Drury Lane with so much taste and correctness.

CHAPTER X.

Princess's : " *Jane Shore*," a drama in five acts, by W. G. Wills.—Prince of Wales's : " *Peril*," a comedy, by Bolton Rowe and Saville Rowe.—Court : " *Brothers*," a comedy in three acts, by Charles Coghlan.—Drury Lane : " *Macbeth* ".—Court : Revival of " *New Men and Old Acres*," by Tom Taylor and A. W. Dubourg.—Lyceum : Revival of " *Macbeth* ".—Lyceum : " *King Richard the Third* ".—Olympic : Revival of Lovell's " *A Wife's Secret* ".—Prince of Wales's " *The Vicarage*," a fireside story, by Saville Rowe.—Olympic : " *The Scuttled Ship*," a drama in a prologue and five acts, by Charles Reade.—Criterion : " *The Pink Dominos*," a comedy in three acts, by James Albery.—St. James's : " *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*," by Massinger.—Aquarium : " *The Inconstant*," altered from Farquhar by F. A. Marshall.

As presented to the public in Rowe's famous tragedy, Oct. 7, 1876. the sorrows of Jane Shore have drawn tears from successive generations of playgoers. Garrick, both the Kemble, Young, and Kean have played Hastings, to whose unbridled passion Rowe has chosen to attribute Jane's sufferings, while a score of actresses, at the head of whom stand Mrs. Oldfield, Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Glover, and Miss O'Neill, have in turns presented the victim of royal favour. Before Rowe had treated the subject, Chettle had written a play, entitled " *Jane Shore*," now lost, which was acted in 1602, and to which some allusions are still found in our older drama, and Heywood had constituted Jane the heroine of the First and Second Parts of " *King Edward the Fourth*," which is described

in the title-page as containing: "His merie pastime with the Tanner of Tamworth, as also his loue to faire Mistresse Shore, her great promotion, fall, and miserie ; and, lastly, the lamentable death of both her and her husband". Rowe's play is fairly touching, the action being arranged so as to avoid the wearisomeness begotten of Jane's prolonged sufferings, and the meek and patient character of the heroine being well contrasted with the passion and jealousy of Alicia, whose treachery to Jane, formerly her friend, brings about the catastrophe. In the Preface, Rowe speaks of Shakspeare's "rough majestic art," and asserts that in the composition of his own play he had

the mighty bard in view ;
And in these scenes has made it more his care
To rouse the passions than to charm the ear.

Rowe's success in this praiseworthy, if ambitious, effort has been mediocre. His play owed some of the fame with which it was accredited to its moral, which is sternly enforced. The last words spoken by Bellmour, one of the characters, are :—

Let those, who viewed this sad example, know,
That Fate attends the broken Marriage-Vow,
And teach their children in succeeding Times,
No common Vengeance waits upon these Crimes ;
When such severe Repentance could not save
From Want, from Shame, and an untimely Grave.

Mr. Wills's play has a higher aim, and exhibits a more dramatic conception, than that of either of his predecessors. Seeking to present a picture analogous in its way to that of "Charles the First," and to illustrate the mutability of fortune, Mr. Wills has presented Jane at the pinnacle of greatness, with a haughty nobility on the one hand, supplicating her smiles and assistance, and a crowd of poor pensioners on the other, craving and receiving her bounty. He has then shown her defeat and downfall. In the hour of her triumph the signs of the future are legible.

Over Jane's shoulder grimaces the ill-omened visage of Gloster, and the young sons of Edward, prompted by him, ask her questions which make her blood curdle beneath her gay vestments. After the death of the King, all, down to the very beggars who have lived upon her alms, desert her, and she seeks vainly a shelter in her husband's house. Driven thence she has an interview with Gloster, who strives to make her his agent in his designs upon the royal princes then in the Tower. Upon her refusal, he taxes her with sorcery in having withered his arm, and causes her to be driven forth to starve. In these scenes Rowe's tragedy, which adhered, it may be supposed, to tradition, runs parallel with the new play. In her despair, Jane is aided by one Grist, a baker, and a neighbour of her husband, who gives her food in spite of royal proclamations. In a fight which ensues between the citizens and the troops of Richard, Shore, whom Jane's penitence has subdued, carries her off to his own house, to recommence the peaceful life the violent passion of Edward had rudely and tyrannically interrupted.

This story is told in language much of which is nervous and poetical. What is dramatic in Mr. Wills's play pertains, however, to conception rather than execution. The peaceful termination is a regrettable concession to public taste. What is most prejudicial to the worth of the whole is that the action throughout is too perpetually gloomy. From the moment when, in the first act, Jane sinks before the wrath of the Queen, she is always prone or on her knees. Mr. Wills's predecessors steered clear of this difficulty by introducing a larger measure of extraneous action, historical or fictitious. One powerful and finely conceived scene, in Mr. Wills's third act, shows Jane returning the curses of Queen Elizabeth with sympathy and pity. In the midst of her own anguish she can find room for sorrow over the mother as yet in ignorance her children are slain. This fine scene is very imperfectly

rendered. Mr. Wills, indeed, has been unfortunate in the exponents of his play. Miss Heath, who plays the heroine, is affected and stagey to a degree fatal to any possibility of interest. Her expression of grief, monotonous at first, grew irritating before the close, and moved a portion of the audience to frequent outbursts of derision. None of the players can be said to have grasped the characters they personate, and more than one turned the part he played into absolute caricature. That a favourable verdict was loudly recorded is principally attributable to the strength of one or two situations, and notably to that of the scene in Cheapside, in which Jane's wants are relieved by the charitable baker.

IT is difficult to avoid a feeling of regret at seeing the Prince of Wales's Theatre, the last home of English comedy, following the example of other houses, and turning for its novelty to the French stage. Regret in this case involves no suspicion of censure.

Quand on n'a pas ce qu'on aime
Il faut aimer ce qu'on a

is a maxim mankind is forced to accept. Since the death of T. W. Robertson, what successes the management of the Prince of Wales's has known have been obtained by revivals of standard plays, or by a departure from what has been considered the special province of the theatre. Another Robertson does not arise, and the hope of obtaining comedies of home growth, suited to the requirements of the theatre, is constantly baulked. Under such circumstances, to have refrained from gathering the dramatic fruit within reach would have been less virtue than Quixotism. The piece with which the first plunge is made is one of the most familiar of modern French comedies. Three successive companies have given it in French, and three English versions have in turns appealed to the public. At first sight, "Nos Intimes" would seem

one of the most intractable of Parisian plays. The characters it develops are thoroughly French; the intrigue, in its nature and in its surroundings, is of a kind which has never been acceptable upon the English stage, and the principal situation is one of the most audacious that has ever been depicted, and has the added disadvantage of forming so distinct an anti-climax that all that comes after it is meaningless and excessive. In spite of these faults, the play in all three versions has been successful, a fact that speaks for its possession of some powerful and sympathetic qualities.

The latest adaptation is fairly skilful and happy. The best feature in it is the manner in which English equivalents have been found for the French eccentrics who form a background to the play, and the happiness of some of the new dialogue. It cannot be said that the crucial difficulty of the story is overcome. In its English dress, this portion of the play seems more difficult of acceptance than in the original. French dramatists treat adultery with a light hand. So long as a woman is saved from immersion it matters little how thin is the ice across which she skates. In England it is different. A more serious tone is necessarily taken in treating it, and the offence becomes, in fact, graver as we grow increasingly conscious of its gravity. A thoughtless and indiscreet woman might say without a blush and without marked offence things which, delivered by a more discreet character and accompanied by signs of self-consciousness, would move strong condemnation. The enhanced effect of which we speak is expressed, moreover, by the manner of the actress as well as by the words of the author. Melting with love and all but yielding to temptation, Mdlle. Caussade, in the hands of Madame Fargueil, the first and incomparably the greatest exponent of the part, bends over her young lover until her cheek brushes his sleeve, and his warm breath is felt upon her. Then,

with impetuous recoil, she springs back, aware of the precipice on the brink of which she stands, and bids him leave her in accents in which command still wars with entreaty. There is danger in every movement, and every change of aspect brings a new phase of peril. She loves him, as she too well knows, and she has no safeguard except honour, the frailty of which, when unsupported, she feels. In the English play, and with the English action, the case is different. Lady Ormond loves her husband and has an Englishwoman's horror of doing anything that shall compromise her fair fame. No influence of passion can deaden her to the call of duty or of respectability. Unthinkingly she lets go her hold upon the safeguards which surround her virtue and her reputation, until, horrified, she finds she is gravely compromised, and is in absolute danger. She has, however, fear of violence alone. No traitorous impulse from within moves her to listen to her lover's appeals. She does not love him the more for the violence he attempts. Her dream, on the contrary, is over, and she experiences for him a repulsion and a hatred she is at no pains to conceal. Such a woman in such a situation is, accordingly, far more culpable than the Frenchwoman, and our sympathy with her is proportionately decreased. Miss Robertson, who shows in the part an amount of feeling she has not previously evinced, marked cleverly the various aspects of the character. Not insensible was she, and there was a longing tenderness, a desire to press to her the bright young head of her lover that was very effective. The scene between her and Mr. Sugden was well given, the young actor contriving, while preserving the demeanour of an Englishman, to reveal some genuine heat. Mr. Bancroft as *Sir George Ormond*, the husband of the heroine, still further accentuated the impression to which reference has been made. He delivered the speeches concerning unfaithfulness with an amount of



W.L.B. Bancroft.

pathos that rendered them impressive, and that showed how serious is, in his estimation, an offence such as, unknown to him, his wife has committed. In other parts less connected with the main plot, the acting was good. Mr. Cecil's *Sir Woodbine Grafton* was a wonderfully minute study of eccentricity. It is one of the disadvantages of adaptations, that they influence acting. The verdict, for instance, upon a performance like that of Miss Robertson is different from what it would have been had she had no predecessor in the part she played.

THE two experiments Mr. Coghlan has made in Nov. 11, 1876. dramatic fiction display that fatal facility which seems all but destructive of good work. "Brothers," with which the Court has now reopened, is a stronger, and in that sense maturer, play than its predecessor upon the same stage. Like "Lady Flora," it is built upon the lines first laid down by T. W. Robertson; it has, like it, a smartness of dialogue not seldom purchased at the sacrifice of dramatic propriety, and, like it also, it introduces a variety of characters, no one of whom is wholly sympathetic or altogether natural. Still it is a bright, clever, and ingenious piece, which, but for an absurdly tangled and impossible last act, would probably win a lasting hold upon the public. Recollections of previous writers are impressed upon us during its performance. These are not strong enough to suggest absolute indebtedness, and the play, but for the distinct intention to copy the Robertsonian method, might rank as original. Its theme, the rivalry between two brothers, has furnished the motive of numerous plays, in addition to Young's tragedy and Cumberland's comedy, both with the same name, the most noteworthy of them being "The Elder Brother" of Beaumont and Fletcher, and the "Inconstant Lady" of Arthur Wilson, a drama supposed to have perished in the con-

flagration caused by Warburton's cook, but subsequently presented to the Bodleian. The treatment is, however, altogether new and striking. Of the characters, one, Capt. Davenport, seems to owe something to Thackeray's Dobbin, while a mysterious personage, constantly heard of and never seen, acts a part in the play analogous to that of Madame Benoiton in M. Sardou's well-known comedy. The same kind of half-imitation hangs about the dialogue. Thus, "A woman without love is a plant without a flower," a sentence spoken by one of the characters, is not unlike Heine's "A woman without religion is a flower without perfume". On the strength of resemblances which may be, and probably are, accidental, we do not seek to impugn Mr. Coghlan's originality. Unfortunately there is too much to condemn in the treatment to drive the critic most bent upon censure to such charges as plagiarism. The prime defect in "Brothers" is, that the characters, almost without exception, are unsympathetic; a second defect is that the last act of the play is wearisome and preposterous. Two brothers, one of whom is ungrateful, vindictive, and unprincipled, and the second haughty and cold-blooded; a girl who has been brought up in garrison, and has flirted with and jilted a respectable contingent of the Indian army; a father who seeks, with shameless effrontery, to sell his daughter for money, and who breaks off in an instant, upon a suspicion of mistake as to the amount of money in question, a match he has diligently prosecuted; an old officer, who persecutes the heroine with his attentions, and contrives by innuendo to drive away her lovers when there is too immediate a prospect of their developing into husbands; and a woman who, while a visitor in her nephew's house, speaks no word that is not intended as an insult to that nephew's guests—these are the personages in whose proceedings Mr. Coghlan seeks to interest. Not unsuccessful, moreover, is his attempt. So ingeniously constructed is the

problem he places before us, we are compelled to busy ourselves with its solution. If, in the end, we give it up, it is because the author has been beforehand with us, and has himself left it practically incomplete.

It is useless to develop at length the treatment Mr. Coghlan has accorded the dramatic fable he has selected. In a conflict between two brothers, one of whom is cold-blooded and selfish, and the other hot-blooded and selfish, the former wins, for the apparent reason that he is a gentleman, while his rival is not. The prize for which both contend is, however, of little value. A young lady, who has been betrothed to each officer in turn in a marching regiment, who accepts the advances of a man not known to her even by name, and who again and again visits him in his studio, is, as the gentleman thus favoured unkindly and ungallantly reminds her, of no special value in the matrimonial market. Some strange spell of fascination seems, however, to cling to her, since she receives, in the house of her future husband, two consecutive proposals of marriage from those who have come as guests at her bridal. Since the wooing of *Lochinvar* we have heard of no proceedings so extraordinary and unconventional.

If Mr. Hare will cut out two-thirds of the last act the piece may yet establish itself in public favour. In addition to that cynicism of which the present generation does not readily weary, the dialogue has freshness and point. One or two passages elicited that second burst of laughter which, coming after the first, ratifies the verdict of approval. The plot opens well, introducing one or two dramatic situations. There are good touches in what follows, though the concluding scenes sink beneath the burden of extraneous matter. A broadly comic effect with which the first act concludes is likely to incur some censure. From the author's point of view, however, it is defensible, and it is so droll and so natural that he would be a churlish critic who would condemn it. The acting has

the *ensemble* Mr. Hare has striven hard and successfully to impart, and many of the impersonations, taken separately, will bear close criticism. The parts played by Miss Ellen Terry, Miss Hollingshead, Mr. Hare, Mr. Conway, and Mr. Kelly could not easily have been better. Mr. Anson started equally well, but degenerated a little as the piece progressed, and accentuated his acting until it ceased to form part of the picture. Two small parts, by Mr. Cathcart and Mr. Leigh, were excellent in their way. On the whole, the acting was of a kind which, a few years ago, it seemed hopeless to expect in England.

Dec. 2, 1876. THE revival of "Macbeth," at Drury Lane, is wholly unimportant so far as theatrical art is concerned. Conventional readings are presented after approved methods, and there is nothing to inspire interest or invite analysis. One point of Shakspearian criticism is, however, suggested. Following the example of Kemble, at the opening of the Drury Lane season on the 21st of May, 1794, Mr. Sullivan leaves the Ghost of Banquo to the imagination of the spectators. This is wrong. That the presence which occupies his seat is visible to Macbeth alone, and is as much a creation of his disordered mind as the air-drawn dagger, is true, though Mrs. Siddons erroneously used to pretend to see the Ghost as well as her husband, and, by exercise of a power of self-control Macbeth did not possess, used to conquer the manifestations of terror its presence was calculated to invoke. The stage direction is, however, plain in the first folio, "Ghost of Banquo enters, and sits in Macbeth's place," and an actor is called upon to abide by directions so express. It would be easy to show that the omission of the Ghost is wrong in every respect. It has again and again been urged by those over-ingenuous spirits, the commentators, that the Ghost who enters on the second occasion during the feast is

not the same as the first, but is the spirit of Duncan. Those who argue for and against this notion lose sight of a fact, sufficiently obvious in representation, which quite disposes of the matter. It is when Macbeth speaks of Banquo his Ghost appears. On the first occasion he says :—

Here had we now our country's honour roof'd
Were the graced person of our Banquo present ;
Who may I rather challenge for unkindness
Than pity for mischance !

Recovering his courage after the Ghost disappears, and with the sort of desperation that makes a man challenge what he most fears, he says again :—

I drink to the general joy o' the whole table,
And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss ;—
Would he were here !—to all, and him, we thirst,
And all to all.

At which words the Ghost re-enters. A moment's meditation on these paragraphs will, we think, dissuade the most confirmed believer in the appearance of Duncan.

THE revival of "New Men and Old Acres," at the Dec. 9, 1876. Court, is noteworthy as offering what must be pronounced, upon the whole, the most competent performance of modern English comedy that recent years have witnessed. Mr. Hare has accumulated around him a company which, from the standpoint of realistic art, is admirable. A late endeavour to galvanise into life a piece which was weak in dramatic interest, and wholly void of sympathy, was unsuccessful. A different result is, however, obtained now that a play containing genuine dramatic fibre is supplied. Of "New Men and Old Acres" we can write nothing different from what we wrote when it was first produced : "It has a simple and very interesting plot and much freshness of characterisation". Now, as before, we find the comic characters a little unnatural and unreal beside the serious characters to whom they serve as foil, and we have

to repeat that, " slight as is the amount of caricature that has been employed, its presence is felt and is distasteful ". The acting, however, deserves the highest praise that can be bestowed upon it. More than one of the actors, notably Mr. Kelly and Mr. Ersler Jones, have been supplied with parts that seem made for them, and others, like Miss Ellen Terry and Mr. Hare, enter so into the spirit of the *rôles* assigned them, that they leave no portion of them unfilled. Without going to the best Parisian theatres, it is not easy to rival the performance now given, and there even the majority of the impersonations would call for notice. This result is highly gratifying to the public, unused to spectacles such as are now presented to it, and is most honourable to the management. Our thankfulness, however, and our congratulations, great as they are, have a limit. When we have actors who can present a comedy of past times in the manner in which this comedy of to-day is interpreted by those Mr. Hare has assembled, acting will again be a living art. Faithfully to reproduce the manners around him is after all but a small portion of a comedian's duty. When, however, there is so much occasion for censure, it would be churlish to refuse praise honestly earned. We may congratulate, accordingly, Mr. Hare and his company upon a performance that lifts off a portion of the reproach under which we have lain, and that is the more noteworthy inasmuch as, of the dozen actors concerned in the performance, there is no one that does not deserve praise.

Dec. 23, 1876. AFTER a successful tour through the country, Mr. Irving has reappeared at the Lyceum. There are few noteworthy alterations in his performance. Some attempt seems to have been made to keep in check the mannerisms which, in an increasing degree, have marred successive impersonations, but in all important respects the Macbeth remains what it was. The best feature in it is the

manner in which physical fatigue seems conquered by energy. In the last act this is especially noticeable. The frame is languid with want of sleep, and rent with conflicting emotions. An unquenchable light of fever burns in the eye, and the resolution to dare all to the last is strikingly conveyed. This is fine, so far as it goes, but it is not sufficient. There is this in *Macbeth*, but there is much more we have always failed to see in Mr. Irving. Actor and piece were received with an enthusiasm that may best be described as passionate. A sight such as is now presented is quite unprecedented in stage history, and is worth taking into account by those who study the age in its various manifestations. We have here a man whom a large portion of the public, and by no means the least cultivated section, receives as a great actor. The manifestations are, moreover, such as we read of in the case of the greatest of his predecessors, and contain that mixture of admiration and personal regard which men like Kean or Kemble were able to inspire in their admirers. Yet criticism holds itself aloof, discontented and unsympathetic, and the actor's own profession, though it is, of course, sensible of merit, fails to partake the enthusiasm of the public. It seems almost as if the kind of critical analysis which the characters of Shakespeare have received had so raised the standard of excellence that it is impossible for an actor, however clever or sympathetic, to fulfil all requirements. The success of Signor Salvini does not, as at first sight it seems, militate against this theory. As a startling novelty and a triumph of realistic method, Signor Salvini's acting in "*Othello*" took a strong hold upon the public. Yet in this case even the correctness of the view taken was fiercely contested. It must be remembered also that the succeeding attempts of Signor Salvini and Signor Rossi to grapple with Shakspearian characters were attended by no very remarkable success.

We see with regret that a misreading we at first attri-

buted to oversight is maintained. In this case it is our duty to proclaim it at once offensive and contemptible. Mr. Irving presents Macbeth as saying, when news is brought him of his wife's death: "She would have died hereafter," instead of: "She should have died hereafter". Now there is no one of the manifold editions of Shakspeare, numerous as these are, and slovenly as is the text of many, to justify a departure from the text which fixes upon a fine passage the stamp of triviality and commonplace. Shakspeare is not a writer whose text should be altered at the caprice of presumption. For another alteration Mr. Irving is not directly, and we hope not indirectly, responsible. The first two lines in the play are:—

When shall we three meet again,
In thunder, lightning, or in rain ?

For the word "or" is substituted in delivery "and," the consequence being that the significance of the query is lost. This reading is adopted in the editions of Hanmer, Capell, and Jennens, but appears in no edition with the slightest pretence to accuracy.

Feb. 3, 1877. IN dealing with the chronicle plays of Shakspeare, and in estimating their fitness for the stage, it is well to take into account the circumstances under which they were first produced, and the aim of the dramatist in their construction. It is almost always difficult to speak with decision as to the object of an author in composing a work, since, even when he is himself communicative on the subject, his reminiscences are apt to be coloured by the reception it has encountered. Prefaces and autobiographical revelations may not unfrequently be classed among the most ingenuous and misleading of things. In Shakspeare's case we know, however, that the chronicle plays were written for a given purpose, and that, with a view to the achievement of the author's object,

previous plays on the subject were laid under contribution. No anxiety seems to have disturbed the mind of Shakspeare as to the verdict future ages were likely to pass upon them. They were intended to interest the public for a brief period, and to be dismissed. "Richard" came late in the order of chronicle plays, and Shakspeare, in its composition, benefited by the experience he had obtained in its predecessors. He found that the public concerned itself little in the case of such works with questions of central interest of balance or of contrast, and he knew that its desire to see the most of strongly marked characters prevailed over all notions of system or arrangement. In "Richard the Third," accordingly, he dismisses all thought of symmetry and of dramatic coherency, beyond that of mere chronological sequence, or that conferred by the grouping of incidents around the principal figure. It is easy to imagine even that the mirth a modern audience seldom fails to manifest at the development of the character of Richard might have fallen gratefully upon his ears, had a sixteenth-century audience, to whom political animosities had a strong significance, and who were taught to regard with hatred the memory of Richard, been able to conquer their prejudices and display any feeling other than horror.

In days when the influence of the Wars of the Roses was still felt, and when such questions as the legitimacy of sovereigns had led but yesterday to every form of internecine broil, the struggles of Richard, which won him two short years of power, had interest not easy now to estimate. It is comprehensible that, with the gradual recession of time, the historic element in the play dwindled in importance, until the idea presented itself to Cibber of strengthening the interest and the construction of a work in which so much that was powerful was, to all practical intents, buried. Cibber's alterations, from his own point of view, were ingenious and defensible. Their highest

praise, it might almost be said their justification, is found in the fact that they have since maintained their place, and that the solitary instance of the production of Shakspeare's play in Genest, the chronicler of things histrionic, is afforded when, in 1821, Macready produced it at Covent Garden, and withdrew it after two representations. In subsequent days, a like experiment at Sadler's Wells, by Mr. Phelps, was not much more successful.

Mr. Irving is then entitled to the full measure of the credit, whatever that may be, involved in bringing, for the first time, the "Richard the Third" of Shakspeare upon the stage, under conditions which secure it an immediate triumph, and will probably gain it a long run. That the popularity of the actor had some effect in bringing about this result is probable. Little credit can certainly be assigned the remainder of the cast, and the intrinsic merits of the play are not high from the dramatic standpoint. In the whole range of the Shakspearian drama, it is probable, no part of serious interest could be found so suited to Mr. Irving as Richard. He will some day, we think, be of more artistic service in a part like Malvolio than he has ever been in more heroic *rôles*. His mannerisms are, however, suited to the character of Richard, and the extravagancies he cannot conquer, though he holds them in check, are less vexatious and distressing in this character than in others he has essayed. At the outset, Mr. Irving presents to perfection the soured, malignant, and ambitious man, to whom men are of no account, who plays with them as though they were dice or counters, and sweeps them away when they have served his purpose. He has a cat-like tread and a readiness to catch information, recalling Louis the Eleventh, whose style of dress he also adopts. Of hatred, in the ordinary sense of the word, he seems incapable. He dislikes and despises all mankind, but he is almost sincere in his assertion :—

I do not know that Englishmen alive,
With whom my soul is any jot at odds,
More than the infant that is born to-night;

and it is as a satirical afterthought he observes,

I thank my God for my humility.

His chief pleasure seems to be derived from observing the ease with which he can play upon men. In this he is like Iago, who says, "Thus do I ever make my fool my purse". When he orders a man to execution it is with a "pish" or a "pshaw," rather than with a feeling of anger. The very incarnation of treachery and malice, he scarcely keeps from the ears of his victims the sneers he utters as asides, and has to repeat, with alterations that change their significance, the words he has spoken. So successful is Mr. Irving in displaying this side of the nature of Richard, or rather this view of his nature, he omits the point ordinarily made by actors in bidding Buckingham stand aside. The words—

Thou troublest me: I am not in the vein,

are spoken with the species of irony which is common with Richard, and not with the angry snarl that usually accompanies them. This is right. It is difficult, indeed, to find any fault with the conception of the character or its presentation in the earlier scenes. When, however, the desertion of friends and the approach of danger rouses the more heroical temper of Richard, Mr. Irving falls into the old extravagance. In the last act he lengthened out the syllables of words until they seemed interminable, and his utterance grew inarticulate—he marred the presentation by grimace and by extravagance of gesture, and went far towards destroying the impression he had made. The experience afforded Mr. Irving in the character should stand him in stead. Exactly in the measure he can repress his tendency to mannerism and rant is the success of his performance. That he has power has been shown

in a dozen consecutive presentations ; that he can subdue it within artistic limits, and so turn it to profitable account, he now proves. What remains to be shown is that he will continue to use the power of self-restraint he possesses, and will be content to forego the enthusiasm extravagance begets in the less educated portion of an audience. How completely misleading this is Mr. Irving may ascertain when he reflects on the fact that the acting of other characters, in which a pitch of farcical extravagance was reached, was received with applause scarcely less loud than was awarded himself.

There are few alterations in the text. Such as are made are wholly valueless. There is a pedantic affectation of correctness in altering the word "her" to "his" in the line concerning Anne—

What though I killed her husband and her father,

seeing that Richard uses again in the same scene the word "her" a few lines further on, and subsequently, when he has another purpose to serve, substitutes "his". It is impossible to say why "promise" is substituted for "present" in the third of the following lines :—

Simple, plain Clarence ! I do love thee so
That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven,
If heaven will take the present at our hands.

Of the alterations in general, it may be said that they are unimportant, and are only objectionable because all unnecessary alteration must be objectionable. In a few cases some changes in delivery might, with advantage, be adopted. One instance is all we shall quote. When, after Queen Margaret's fierce imprecation, Gloster, with customary scorn, says to Dorset,

Good counsel, marry ; learn it, learn it, Marquis.

—and is answered—

It touches you, my lord, as much as me.

—Gloster continues—

Ay, and much more: But I was born so high,
Our airy buildeth in the cedar's top,
And dallies with the wind and scorns the sun.

Here there should be an emphasis on “dallies” and on “scorns,” seeing that the intention is to convey that the blasts and other influences before spoken of as dangerous to others are innocuous or pleasurable to him and his lineage.

The general mounting of the play is admirable. The remainder of the cast affords little opportunity for favourable comment.

“THE WIFE’S SECRET” of Lovell is in some respects Mar. 24, 1877. a typical drama. Produced by Charles Kean at a time when the stage first commenced to shake off what was most dishonouring in its associations, and aspired to become a means of social education and reform, it stands forth a model of the kind of work to be hoped when art and literature are subjected to puritanical limitations. As much strength as can well be imparted to a piece in which everything is sacrificed to propriety and respectability is possessed by it; and its interest is as keen as can be hoped in the case of a play in which rage speaks with its finger upon its lips, and passion in its wildest outbreak keeps its eye fixed upon the lines of its draperies. Respect for the decencies of life is not inconsistent with tragic suffering. Polyxena, who, according to Talthybius, when the Greeks are about to offer her as a sacrifice, rends herself her garments:—

*λαβοῦσα πέπλους ἐξ ἄκρας ἐπωμίδος,
ἔρρης λαγόνος εἰς μέσον, παρ’ ὀμφαλόν
μαστούς τ’ ἔδειξε, στέρνα θ’, ὡς ἀγάλματος
κάλλιστα—*

is the same who in dying thinks only of what is maidenly and becoming:—

ἡ δὲ, καὶ θνήσκουσ', ὅμως,
πολλὴν πρόνοιαν εἰχεν εὐσχήμως πεσεῖν
κρύπτουσ' ἢ κρύπτειν ὅμματ' ἀρσένων χρεών.

Passions are, however, difficult things to run in double harness, and despair will not always be controlled by outside notions of what is seemly. When, after listening with incredulity to the explanations of Emilia, Othello says to her with irrepressible scorn :—

Some of your function, mistress;
Leave procreants alone, and shut the door:
Cough or cry “hem,” if anybody come;
Your mystery, your mystery—nay, despatch—

burning indignation and supreme loathing are traceable in every word. Under circumstances precisely analogous, the hero of “The Wife’s Secret” orders out of his way the girl he supposes to have ushered in his wife’s gallant, and calls her a “useful go-between”. The selection of terms speaks highly for the moderation of Sir Walter Amyott, and shows how well ordered was the muse of Lovell. Passion, however, would not be likely to employ such a euphemism, but would be apt to call a spade a spade.

It must not be supposed that we seek to bring back to our stage such excess of licence as was accorded it in its palmy days. Still, if life is to be presented, it must be real life. Very well in their way are goody-goody novels and edifying poems. The drama, however, and the tragic drama especially, which aims at purging the soul through pity and fear, must present men as they are, or must lose all claim to the position it holds. It is in the very nature of things that the popular drama shall be a fair reflection of the age before which it is set. From a drama more decorous or more indecorous than the time the public will recoil, in the one case through weariness, in the other through dislike.

It is scarcely just, perhaps, to “The Wife’s Secret,”

which has genuine merit, to make it the text of a sermon of this class. Charles Kean rather than Lovell is the person to whom Philistinism is to be imputed, if any charge of Philistinism can be maintained. "The Wife's Secret" is, however, aggressive not only on account of its sustained propriety, but because it is, in fact, a modernised "Othello". Convert Othello into a Christian gentleman, Desdemona into a British matron, and Iago into a puritanical impostor, and provide the story with a happy *dénouement*, and Lovell's play is the result. It is a work such as a bishop might commend to a management he had taken under his special protection. Perfect men and women are, however, in this world moral monsters. A man who can check the course of passion, and can turn upon the woman who has introduced a lover into his wife's apartment and call her a "useful go-between," is far too decorous a gentleman to form the subject of any suffering except that special form of calamity which is intended to serve the purpose of a moral lesson. On the stage a different kind of man is required. It is our vices that turn upon us and rend us; it is our crimes that bring upon us the Fates and the Furies.

Accepting "The Wife's Secret" for what it is worth, and taking up the standpoint of the author, the only serious charge that can be brought against it is its excessive length. A simple story, which Scribe or Bayard would have converted into an admirable two-act play, is spread over five acts. One act—the third—includes the action; two previous acts are devoted to preparing for it, and the two subsequent acts are occupied with delaying a termination known to be inevitable. It is written with earnestness, however, and some of the concluding scenes, though impossible, are touching and dramatic. Mr. Neville has done well in bringing again before the public this piece, the first production of which, in America, dates back to 1845. It was not until three years later that Mr. Charles

Kean, who had found it a *pièce de résistance* in a tour through the United States, gave it at the Haymarket. Mr. Neville's own style is manly and broad. He played the part of *Sir Walter Amyott* as well as any living English actor could present it. As *Lady Eveline*, Miss Pateman reached a point of great pathos; she is still, however, terribly artificial, and the wheels and springs of her art are always open to the observer. She recalls, indeed, one of those modern clocks in which the dial-plate, all but the band containing the figures, is removed, and the action of the works is disclosed to the spectator. Mr. Pateman's presentation of a puritanical steward was not without force. Miss Camille Dubois gave a very agreeable picture of a maiden

Passing praise,
Strait-laced, but all-to-full, in bud
For puritanic stays.

Other parts, with the exception of a small character taken by Mr. Vollaire, were played badly. It is due to art to say, painful as is the statement where a lady is concerned, that Miss Chapman's voice constitutes a complete disqualification, and that the young lady should serve art or society in some other function than as an actress.

April 7, 1877. THE version of "Le Village" of M. Octave Feuillet, produced at the Prince of Wales's under the title of "The Vicarage," differs widely from the original, and wholly from the previous adaptation, known as the "Cosy Couple". In "Le Village" M. Feuillet has no aim beyond contrasting a life of adventure with the quiet and rather humdrum existence of a country town, and assigning to the latter the preference. In "The Vicarage" a more didactic purpose is evident. For a country notary, not without some points of resemblance to the comic

bourgeois who is the constant hero of French farce, is now substituted an English clergyman, and the question argued is whether it is fitting that a man in such a station shall live a home life or shall indulge in the luxury of foreign travel.

Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits,

says Valentine to Proteus. The truth of this proposition is shown in the Rev. Noel Haygarth, who, after thirty years' repose in a country vicarage, is startled by the appearance of George Clarke, a friend of college days. As he listens to the lively portraiture of foreign scenes and foreign manners given by his impetuous visitor, a desire to shake off the sloth into which he has fallen, and to see the world of which he has dreamed, comes upon him. A few glasses of sherry and a cigar make of him a complete convert to the opinions of his friend, and his wife accordingly, on her return from the discharge of some charitable duty, finds him packing up his clothes for immediate departure. A duel follows between the woman upon whose "secure hour" the spoiler has thus stolen, and the stranger who has dared to—

Creep and intrude and climb into the fold.

In the end tears, the unfailing armour of weakness, prove again triumphant, and the man who has come for the purpose of deriding his friend's commonplace existence remains to share it. It would be easy to show that this teaching is futile. A priest who quits for awhile his duties to see the world is guilty of no offence, and a traveller who is hardened in a life of selfishness is not likely to become an instantaneous convert to stay-at-home doctrines, or to bring much comfort to those whose existence he proposes to share. It is, however, hypercritical to investigate too closely the motive of a piece so unpretending and so graceful. "The Vicarage" has a delicious atmosphere, and it is interpreted with a completeness

which cannot easily be rivalled on the English stage. The four characters by whom its action is presented are fully realised. Mrs. Bancroft as *Mrs. Haygarth* presents admirably the bright, cheerful, and devout spouse of a country vicar, whose mind is filled with the dignity of her position, and whose ambition is satisfied with the discharge of routine duties. There is a tendency to laugh a little too much in the cheerier part. This, however, is all that needs alteration. The emotional aspects of the character are given with supreme skill, and the entire performance is admirably finished and effective.

Equally fine, delicate, and studied is the *Rev. Noel Haygarth* of Mr. Arthur Cecil, who presents to the life a meek, peaceful, and benign clergyman of an old-fashioned type. Mr. Kendal at the commencement is excellent as the traveller whose irruption gives rise to the plot, but fails to present very satisfactorily the more serious interest which, it must be owned, is to English tastes rather unnecessarily and clumsily introduced. Mr. Newton gives a very clever presentation of a faithful and privileged old servant. There is about the whole something tender and idyllic, and eminently devotional. To keep up this feeling, which is altogether appropriate to the scene, the last words of the play, spoken by Mrs. Haygarth, should be:—

It has been our first sadness, and, by God's help, it shall be our last,
my husband.

When spoken as it now is, without the words "by God's help," there is a species of presumption on which a woman such as the heroine would not venture. The adaptation is on the whole cleverly executed, and the interpretation is a credit to English art.

MR. READE'S adaptation of his story of "Foul Play" attains a high point of interest and dramatic strength. It is, however, clumsy in shape, and weakened by the intro-

duction of matter irrelevant to the plot. In the scenes on the island, during which the heroine learns the true state of her feelings with regard to the man who has shared her captivity, a keen sympathy for the lovers is aroused. From this point the interest does not flag, and the end of the play comes almost too soon, since a desire is stirred to follow closely the process of unravelling a mystery so complicated and so ingenious. The comic scenes are, however, unsatisfactory, and the revels on shipboard are insignificant. Mr. Reade would, indeed, have done well in presenting a portion of the action in pantomime. After the dramatic, but not too necessary prologue, and the scene in Hobart Town in which the departure of the doomed ship is witnessed, and the full infamy of the transaction which brings about its destruction is unveiled, a panorama of the fate of the vessel would have been more effective than the scenes on shipboard which are presented. There is some force in the dispute between the hero and Wylie, to whom the task of destruction is committed, but the scene leads to nothing. The hero does not keep his promise of bringing Wylie to the gallows, nor is Wylie himself the kind of man to do the deed assigned him. A curious sort of moral is, moreover, inculcated in the treatment of Wylie, who, after he has given up the money he received for scuttling the ship, seems to think himself re-established in the world's esteem, and able to look honest men in the face without flinching. The performance of the principal characters was adequate. Mr. Neville has seldom acted with more power than he displayed as the clergyman hero. Mr. Forbes Robertson gave an altogether novel presentation of villainy. Miss Pateman played the heroine in fairly effective style, and Mr. Pateman and Mr. Ashford, the latter an actor new to London, were satisfactory as sailors. The escapades of a Mr. Artaud, who had to present a drunken captain, were extra-

vagant enough to threaten at one time the success of the piece.

THE well-known defence which, according to Scott, Sterne adopted when a Yorkshire lady told him that his book was not proper for female perusal, would probably be employed with more propriety by Mr. Albery to vindicate his version of "Les Dominos Roses" of MM. Hennequin and Delacour. If not exactly childlike in innocence, the intrigue in "The Pink Dominos" has, at least, no absolute wickedness. What is worst in it is of that kind which Coleridge characterised when he said: "We have only to suppose society innocent, and then nine-tenths of this sort of wit would be like a stone that falls in snow, making no sound because exciting no resistance". The English version is a capital instance of successful adaptation. In some respects, indeed, it is better than the original. The dialogue is wholly English, and brims over with that kind of oddity of association in which Mr. Albery is unequalled. The last act is a model of construction. The plot of this piece was briefly mentioned and characterised when the original was given, in May of last year, at the Vaudeville. A fairly competent exposition was provided, Mr. Standing, Mr. Wyndham, Mr. J. Clarke, Miss Fanny Josephs, Miss Eastlake, and Miss Camille Clermont taking the principal parts. Mr. Ashley assumed the character of an old *bourgeois*, originally assumed by M. Parade, and enacted it with a quietude for which we were thankful, since the slightest excess would have rendered it wholly detestable.

Apr. 21, 1877. Two plays of Massinger still maintain a sort of hold upon the stage. Once at least within the memory of a middle-aged playgoer, "The Fatal Dowry" has been produced in London, while "A New Way to Pay Old



Mr. Charles Wyndham.

Debts" has been given half-a-dozen times since the middle of the century. The latest revival of the play last named took place at the Haymarket, in October, 1861, during the short engagement of Edwin Booth, and is remembered less on account of the impersonation of Sir Giles Overreach by that rather tumid tragedian, than because of Mr. Compton's masterly performance of Marrall. On the strength of the single character of Sir Giles Overreach it has been the fashion to rank Massinger above his fellow-dramatists. Such pre-eminence is, however, undeserved. In that marvellous combination of poetry, passion, and imagination, which seems the special attribute of the Shakspearian drama, Massinger is inferior not only to master-spirits like Beaumont and Fletcher, Marlowe and Webster, but to such men as Heywood, Decker, or Ford. His works have, however, some special merits which commend them to the stage. Though rough and unfinished, his characters are largely drawn, his stories are interesting and sympathetic, and are educed with some knowledge of what is likely to please an audience, and his style is suited to the modern actor from the absence of those more delicate graces and subtler harmonies which distinguish the verse of poets of ampler inspiration and puzzle actors into whose training, if they ever had any, knowledge of the requirements of verse has never entered.

The fact that Massinger occupies a second-rate position among dramatists does not prevent him from having produced, in *Sir Giles Overreach*, a character almost unequalled in the opportunities it offers an actor. Except Garrick and Macready, every actor of note since the beginning of the last century has essayed it, and Henderson, Cooke, Pope, both the Keans, Kemble, Vandenhoff, Elton, Brooke, Booth, and Mr. Phelps have in turns appeared in it. Kean's success in it was the most conspicuous he ever obtained. The picture of the house, with Byron fainting in the auditorium, Mrs. Glover faint-

ing on the stage, Mrs. Horn weeping on a chair into which she had fallen, and Munden, so transfixed that he had to be dragged off the boards by the arms, absolutely powerless to help himself, is the most striking that has ever been presented in a theatre. On the return from the theatre, Kean was questioned by his wife as to what Lord Essex had said concerning his performance. "Damn Lord Essex!" answered the excited tragedian; "the pit rose at me." In the conception of this character Massinger seems to have caught a breath of inspiration from Marlowe. Sir Giles Overreach is as implacable as Barabas and as daring as Faustus. He pursues his way to his end with a calm serenity of villainy perfectly diabolic. It is a mistake from the highest standpoint that the end is insignificant. The lust of Faustus for knowledge is in itself noble, though the means he takes to gratify it are unblest, and the crimes of Barabas, like the revenge of Shylock, find a certain element of mitigation in the fact that each in his feelings represents the result of centuries of wrong and oppression. Overreach, however, is bad from a species of innate love of tyrannising over his fellows. Such men exist. They are seldom, however, content with an aim so modest as marrying their daughters to lords. Such an ambition is wholly unworthy of the man who walks on his way unperturbed by railing and outcry, and when asked if he is not frightened with the curses and imprecations of those he has ruined, answers—

Yes, as rocks are
When foamy billows split themselves against
Their flinty ribs; or, as the moon is moved,
When wolves, with hunger pined, howl at her brightness.

This defect, however, is felt only in reading the play or reflecting upon it, and does not detract seriously from the value of the character for the purposes of the actor. For the rest, Sir Giles Overreach is best painted in the descrip-

tion given of him by Furnace, who contrasts with the common practices of usurers his haughty carriage:—

To have a usurer that starves himself,
And wears a cloak of one-and-twenty years,
On a suit of fourteen groats, bought of the hangman,
To grow rich, and then purchase, is too common.
But this Sir Giles feeds high, keeps many servants,
Who must at his command do any outrage;
Rich in his habit, vast in his expenses;
Yet he to admiration still increases
In wealth and lordships.

A man of this calibre, who keeps in his pay, by ministering to his vices, a justice of the peace, to sanction all his deeds of rapine and to afford him opportunity for instant action, a man whom weapons cannot affright, who is ignorant of fear to the extent of not caring to hide his villainies, and who has the strength and courage of the trained warrior to back up the aggression of the pettifogger—who is, in fact, as the play says, a combination of the lion and the fox—will soon get so used to triumph over men of less energy and resolution that victory will seem to fight on his side. To such a one defeat appears an impossibility. When, accordingly, he finds, at the crowning instant of his life, the whole edifice of his grandeur melt away, and sees himself duped and befooled, there is small cause for marvel if the shock produces madness. At the moment when, regardless how many swords may pierce his own breast, he is ready to rush through all obstacles to glut his vengeance, the brain yields and the heart-strings crack, the arm, paralysed, lets fall the innocuous sword, and a sudden qualm of conscience, the first he has felt, comes upon him. He feels that orphans' tears glue the sword to the scabbard, and that widows undone by him arrest his arm. All this is finely conceived, and is susceptible of magnificent exposition.

Mr. Vezin's performance of *Sir Giles* is thoughtful and capable. It does not reach grandeur, but it abounds in

intellectual touches. We fail to see the splendid vitality that triumphs over all obstacles and revels in the sense of power, but we see the resolute bad man, implacable in animosity and defiant in wrong-doing. The finest point is that in which the actor seeks to approach his daughter, whom he purposed to slay for her disobedience. This was finely conceived and finely executed. The whole performance is worthy of Mr. Vezin's reputation. Mr. Clayton acted with much force and dignity as *Wellborn*, and realised fully the character of the dissipated but loyal and manly gentleman. Mr. Flockton was powerful as *Marrall*, and Miss Kate Pattison made a favourable *début* as *Margaret*. The whole fun of the character of *Justice Greedy* is lost in consequence of the actor assuming a portly appearance. He should, in fact, as the text directs, be a thin and lanky personage. The plot of "A New Way to Pay Old Debts" was, in part, suggested by Middleton's "A Trick to Catch the Old One".

June 2, 1877.

UNTIL London is provided with some form of sub-ventioned theatre, and with something in the shape of a school of histrionic art, we may as well dismiss the hope of seeing the comedies of the Restoration acted as they ought to be acted, if any serious end is to be served by their revival. Once and again a solitary piece is drawn forth and exhibited in the light much in the same fashion as we might take from a closet some long-preserved relic of past finery, and shake out of it the dust and the moths. A performance, however, such as that of "The Inconstant," now to be witnessed at the Aquarium, at which it comes forth as the first of a series of representations of a similar class, is no more serious approach to a genuine revival of our older drama than the gathering together at a fancy ball of a number of worthy and commonplace people, in *bizarre* and incongruous dresses of past epochs,

is an effort to return to the costume of our forefathers. A certain measure of interest attends the reproduction of "The Inconstant". Mr. Marshall has edited the dialogue with remarkable care and success, and has rendered it conformable to modern tastes with slight excisions, and with less sacrifice of flavour than was anticipated by those who know how like old art is to old wine, and how dangerous in each case is the process of rebottling. The entire number of words of his own he has found cause to insert amounts, according to his own assertion, to fewer than fifty. A statement of this kind will be readily accepted by those who have witnessed the performance, and noticed how thoroughly the language of the Restoration comedy is preserved. No less conspicuous than the triumph of Mr. Marshall is that of Mr. Planché, who has supplied dresses which, in point of picturesqueness and accuracy, leave nothing to be desired, and views which are worth studying for the sake of the light they throw upon the Paris of the closing years of Louis XIV. Of the acting it may be said that it is surprisingly good, considering the difficulties that had to be combated. Mr. Warner's *Young Mirabel* had gaiety and animal spirits, which compensated for the absence of distinction. It is high praise to say of an actor, trained under such conditions as now exist in England, that he gave a presentation of a gallant of the Restoration which was free from offence, and might claim, in some respects at least, to be lifelike and conceivable. Against Mr. Stephens as *Old Mirabel* it might be urged that the personality of the actor overmastered that of the character; while of Mr. Fawn (*Duretéte*), Mr. Macklin (*Dugard*), Miss Meyrick (*Bisarre*), and Miss Brennan (*Oriana*), it can only be said that they acted with moderation, and failed only in those respects in which success was scarcely to be hoped. The presence of one animating spirit behind the representation was felt by the audience, and the play interested and amused.

These concessions made, there remains the fact that a reproduction of this kind is mere trifling. If we are ever again to have a school of acting we must have a serious revival of old plays so far as they are reconcilable to modern tastes, and if we are to have a serious revival of old plays we must have a school of acting. After that period, lamentable from the histrionic standpoint, of civil war which broke us altogether off from the traditions of Shakspeare, and left Betterton the practical father of our stage, an unbroken succession of representations of old comedy was given until the early portion of this century. Traditions concerning Duretête were transmitted from Garrick (Bullock was the first representative of the part and Miller the second) through Lewis and Dodd to Liston, Vining, and Harley. Charles Kemble inherited, as Young Mirabel, the teaching of Wilks and Palmer; and Elliston, Munden, and Dowton might learn, as Old Mirabel, from such predecessors as Pinkethman, Yates, Shuter, Edwin, Parsons, and Quick.

Since this period, however, it has been shown that if

Peace has her victories
Not less renowned than war,

she likewise has her defeats, which are not less renowned also. Quite as fatal as that period of internecine struggle—in which the actors, proving their right to the title they had borne of the King's servants, died fighting the King's battles, and left at the Restoration not enough of all sorts to constitute a couple of meagre companies—has been the period of peace in which men have allowed all knowledge of past art to expire. Since 1828 there have been, so far as we are aware, two revivals of "The Inconstant," which was included in that fine series of performances rendering illustrious Mr. Phelp's management of Sadler's Wells, and was played for a short time at the Gaiety. It is difficult to speak authoritatively on the subject, since, for half-a-century, the drama has sunk into such neglect

that no one has had courage to write its history or even to preserve a mere record of events of note. There are, accordingly, few actors on the stage who have ever seen this piece. It is time, then, that if we are to make an attempt at founding a school of acting it should be done, for shortly there will be no teachers left, and we shall have to borrow our professors from the schools of foreign countries, where, luckily, more liberal views concerning art prevail.

Is it, then, expedient, it may be asked, to form schools of art for the purpose of reviving a class of work that, on account of its immorality, has already

Fallen into disgrace and in the nostrils
Smells horrible?

Perhaps not, though Mr. Marshall's experiment proves that works of this class may be purged of offence without losing their quality, and though the fact remains that excessive squeamishness is not characteristic of the English race, but of a puritanical minority that plays its "fantastic tricks" because men of information and taste are indolent in matters in which no great principle seems to be involved. If ever, however, we are to have a comedy, other than that so-called realistic comedy which is now in vogue, and if men are to be able to play well in pieces, the scenes of which are laid in ages before individuality of manner and costume was abandoned, it will be necessary to train young actors to play such parts as the Mirabels.

Reflections of this class are forced upon us by a revival such as that of "The Inconstant". In propounding again and again the view that it is the duty of an enlightened government to found a school of acting, and maintaining that no government that refuses its aid in a scheme of the kind has a right to be considered enlightened, we are but beating the empty air. Still the duty of speaking truths of this kind remains. Needful reforms are not obtained

without considerable repetition, and the persistence of those who maintain erect a standard around which men will some day rally is not the less honourable, because no knowledge of them may survive to the generation which benefits by their endurance.

Of the play itself, it is sufficient to say that it comes apparently through France from a Spanish or Italian source, but that it has not hitherto been traced further back than the "Wild Goose Chase" of Beaumont and Fletcher, from which the first four acts are taken. The termination is said by Farquhar to be founded on an adventure of Le Chevalier de Chatillon. In some respects the play is primitive, the subordinate characters being purely conventional. Mirabel is, however, entertaining, and Oriana sympathetic. Some of the dialogue is witty, and more than one speech might easily be ascribed to Sheridan, who seems to have had an admiration for Farquhar leading him to the borders of direct imitation.

CHAPTER XI.

Gaiety : “*Le Wagon des Dames*”.—*Lyceum* : “*The Dead Secret*,” drama in a prologue and three acts.—*Olympic* : “*The Moonstone*,” drama in four acts by Wilkie Collins.—*Haymarket* : “*Engaged*,” comedy in three acts by W. S. Gilbert.—*Court* : “*The House of Darnley*,” comedy in five acts by Edward, Lord Lytton.—*Prince of Wales’s* : “*Diplomacy*,” comedy in five acts by Bolton Rowe and Saville Rowe.—*Globe* : “*A Fool and His Money*,” comedy in three acts by Henry J. Byron.—*Haymarket* : “*Twelfth Night*”.—*Olympic* : “*The Ne'er-do-Weel*,” comedy in three acts by W. S. Gilbert.—*Lyceum* : “*Louis XI.*”.—*Olympic* : “*The Vagabond*,” by W. S. Gilbert, being the “*Ne'er-do-Weel*” rewritten.—*Court* : “*Olivia*,” drama in four acts by W. G. Wills.—*Aquarium* : “*The Vicar of Wakefield*,” by Tom Taylor.—*Haymarket* : “*Romeo and Juliet*”.

“*LE WAGON DES DAMES*,” in which the latest appearance of Madame Chaumont has been made before a London public, provides the actress with a part altogether unlike any in which she has been previously seen in this country. As the heroine of “*Madame attend Monsieur*,” she exhibits the anger of a *bourgeoise* whose husband, while urging upon her the necessity of a rigid economy, has set up unknown to her a second establishment, over which a rival presides. As *Toto*, in “*Toto chez Tata*,” she depicts the humours and extravagancies of French youth, and lets us into the very heart of a French schoolboy. “*L’Autographe*” shows us the *soubrette*, young, pretty,

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intriguing, and full of talent and vivacity, the direct descendant of the *suivante* of Molière, Elise or Lisette, as the case may be. In *Berthe*, in "Le Wagon des Dames," a part she created eleven years ago at the Gymnase, Madame Chaumont now depicts the French girl. The impersonation is, accordingly, a species of companion picture to that of Toto. So accustomed are we to see the French young lady a type of all that is gentlest and most innocent, or at least most unsophisticated in life, we scarcely dare pronounce an opinion as to the truthfulness of this new presentation. A young lady who, brought up with all the protections accorded to French maidenhood, talks of such articles of attire as a "suivez moi, jeune homme," or a "permission de dix heures," retails before the family circle the latest adventure that is recorded concerning "ces dames" and their admirers, and imitates the style and walk of the *lorette* with a fidelity that leaves nothing to be desired, strikes those familiar with the French stage of to-day as a species of monster. Pains are, however, taken to prove that the knowledge of the world of this precocious young heroine is only skin-deep, and that behind her tolerably free and easy manners lurks the innocence of the *ingénue*. That Madame Chaumont can render amusing a part like this is a truth that will readily find credence. That any young woman answering absolutely to the type the actress presents can be found in France is doubtful. Her enjoyment of the droll situations she brings about is incompatible with ignorance of the nature of the confusion she creates. In farce, however, audiences are not exacting with regard to absolute truth to nature, and, from any other standpoint, the performance is delightful.

Sept. 1, 1877. IT must not be supposed that the "Dead Secret" successfully produced on Wednesday represents, with any

approach to fulness and variety, the novel on which it is founded. The Lyceum drama resolves itself into a good orthodox ghost-story, which, quite setting aside the subtle refinements of modern glamour, luminous hands, bouquets fresh from the Elysian Fields, and melodies condescendingly played by spiritual fingers upon material guitars, boldly relies upon the most primitive and venerable machinery of supernaturalism, and darts back at a bound from the days of Mr. Home to those of Mrs. Radcliffe.

Sarah Leeson, whose illegitimate child is brought up as that of her wealthy mistress, is imperatively commanded by the latter on her deathbed to write and witness a full confession of the fraud that has been practised. Instead of doing so, the afflicted mother, desirous to preserve her name from disgrace and her child from penury, hides the evidence in the house of her deceased mistress, a want of good faith which the ghost of the latter avenges by appearing to the delinquent so often and so menacingly that her reason and even her life are threatened. Eventually Sarah Leeson's daughter, then grown up, discovers the confession, and reveals it to her husband, who, though the humility of his wife's origin is thus brought to light, loves her all the better for the frankness of her conduct. Ultimately the mother is tenderly forgiven by the child, upon which the avenging ghost ceases to pursue her, and leaves her with a reasonable prospect of happiness.

Such is the story, which, if it at no time greatly excited the audience, yet managed fairly to engage its interest. The wailings of dismal winds, the oaken bedroom with its four-post bedstead, the occasional apparition of the vindictive ghost through the gauzes, did not exactly produce awe, but awoke in the spectators that sort of sociable recognition which is due to very ancient acquaintances. Miss Bateman, as the heart-stricken and nervous mother, was thoroughly in earnest, and succeeded more than once

in producing a marked impression upon the house. If in the earlier scenes her acting was too much in one key, the fault should rather be ascribed to the sameness of the positions she has to fill than to herself.

Sept. 22, 1877. MR. WILKIE COLLINS cannot be congratulated on the manner in which he has dramatised his novel of "The Moonstone". That a work so ambitious in aim, and so composite in nature, could not without some sacrifice of character and of story be brought within the compass of a play, was obvious from the first. There must surely, however, have been some means of obtaining the desired result at a sacrifice less damaging than that of the whole character and conception of the novel. The extravagance and impossibility of portions of "The Moonstone" are forgotten by the reader who finds himself steeped in a rich glow of Oriental colour. In its way, "The Moonstone" is a species of "Monte Christo," a work in which you are content to admit what you know to be inconceivable, and allow full scope to an invention which supplies so fully every detail of the life it creates; you accept as true what might have been, even though it is not. There is something impressive in the conception of the circumstances under which the jewel is stolen from an Indian idol; the magic power with which it is supposed to be invested and the sort of curse attached to its possession flatter that love of the supernatural which lurks within our nature; and the figures of the three Indians dogging the possessors of the sacred emblem, though they lend themselves easily to ludicrous associations, are not without an element of absolute terror. In the dramatic version this is entirely lost. Some slight attempt is made to attach to the possession of the stone a species of curse. The panic, however, of an imbecile old servant, which is unshared by any other character, forms but a poor substitute for the weird

qualities with which in the original the gem is invested ; and the declaration of the heroine at the end, that she will sell the stone and build with the money thus obtained an hospital, strikes us only as unreasonable. In degrading the moonstone, Mr. Collins degrades his story. Thus, though he has framed an interesting and successful play, we cannot help wishing he had called it something else.

The entire story consists in the theft of the moonstone by Franklin Blake while he is in a state of somnambulism, and the solution of the mystery thus begotten by means of a surgeon, who, placing Blake in conditions exactly the same as those in which he has formerly been, causes him to repeat his previous action. There is, in addition, a rivalry for the hand of Rachel Verinder between the unconscious perpetrator of the theft and Godfrey Ablewhite, the pseudo-philanthropist, who endeavours to turn the action to his own profit. Now, putting on one side the question of the inadequacy of the cause which brings about the tendency to sleep-walking—though this, which is in the play merely the effect of supper and a glass of hot brandy-and-water upon a man who is in a nervous condition and is unused to such indulgence, does, in fact, by its frivolity, shock the spectator—it is obvious there is no need, in the case of so simple a plot, to call in the agency of the moonstone. Any article of value enough to tempt a man who is needy would do as well as this for the purpose, and the play would be to the full as effective. It would, indeed, be in all respects more satisfactory to substitute bank-notes for the diamond, seeing that Ablewhite might, under such circumstances, be more easily tempted to the crime he commits, inasmuch as he could scarcely hope, without encountering extreme risk, to dispose of a gem of the splendour and size of the moonstone. If it is urged against this that the play would thus be reduced to the level of an ordinary drama suggested by the opera of “ *La Somnambula*,” the answer is that this

is already done, and that the substitution we recommend would do nothing to lower the tone of the work.

Thus, though the play is interesting and successful, and needs only slight alterations to obtain a success equal to that of its author's former dramas, it is disappointing from the standpoint of Mr. Collins's previous accomplishment. The only other fault we are inclined to find is, that some of the characters undergo a distinct process of deterioration. *Rachel Verinder*, *Betteredge*, and *Penelope* remain pretty much the same as they appear in the book, though *Betteredge* has lost his habit of referring everything to "Robinson Crusoe," after the fashion formerly adopted in the *Sortes Homericæ* or *Virgilianæ*. *Rosanna Spearman*, like the three Indians, has entirely disappeared. *Franklin Blake* seems at first a heartless adventurer, his anxiety to espouse the heiress at a time when he is absolutely penniless exposing him to the worst suspicion. *Godfrey Ablewhite* becomes a species of transparent hypocrite, and *Miss Clack*'s sanctimony and meddlesomeness, seen from without and not from within, are far less telling. Some strong situations are obtained, the ablest being that when the hero is openly taxed with theft by the woman he loves. The play is curiously conformable to old ideas, the unities of time and place being rigorously observed. The action thus passes in one scene, the breakfast-room in the house of *Miss Verinder*, and the entire time it occupies is little more than twenty-four hours. A respectable interpretation was afforded. Mr. Neville marked with distinctness the different phases of shame and indignation through which the hero passed, and was, as he always is, manly and effective. Miss Pateman showed much force and breadth of style as *Rachel*. It is to be regretted that her costume suggested burlesque rather than serious drama. A lady appearing at breakfast time in her own house in a dress with a train extending half way across the stage is an almost unpardonable absurdity. Mr.

Hill was *Betteredge*, a part thoroughly fitted to him ; Mr. Pateman *Mr. Candy*, Mr. Harcourt *Ablewhite*, and Mr. Swinbourn *Sergeant Cuff*. The interpretation of these characters was competent, without being in any respect remarkable.

IN his new comedy of "Engaged," Mr. Gilbert is on Oct. 13, 1877. familiar ground. Though no fairy influence or agency surrounds his characters or prompts their actions, the world in which they move is a region of pure fantasy. The idea on which the superstructure rests is kindred to that which forms the basis of "The Palace of Truth". Each of the various personages he presents is compelled by some mysterious agency to reveal whatever is base in his nature. That species of mental reserve which underlies and qualifies our actions is here brought forward, and our deeds are read by the light of our unconscious avowals. As no one is shocked by the display of folly or meanness on the part of others, and as all seem to pride themselves on their candour, and to anticipate a favourable construction for their actions, the world, though nominally the Scottish border in the first act, and London in the two acts which follow, is, in fact, fairyland. Mr. Gilbert's satire is strong and trenchant. Its obvious butt is less the intrinsic baseness of human nature than the falsehood of our social pretences. The one, in truth, includes the other. None except beings influenced by poor and pitiful motives would seek to present themselves to the world as other than they are, and the prolonged existence of social shams affords proof how weak is the society in which they pass current. It is principally by implication, however, that Mr. Gilbert attacks human nature in general. What he seeks to do is to supply the kind of reservation we unconsciously place upon our gifts. A man offers a distressed and defenceless woman his assistance. He does not, however, mean in so doing to be out of pocket by his

chivalry. Mr. Gilbert makes him speak his full thought. "Count upon any assistance, madam, short of pecuniary aid, that I am able to offer." The woman proclaims the passion she feels for her lover, and will be his through time and eternity, if he will give her the home and the comforts she regards as indispensable to her position. With equal frankness every character unburdens his mind, the result being to afford a picture of humanity more cynical than has perhaps been painted since the days of Swift.

It might almost be said, borrowing an illustration from Coleridge, that Mr. Gilbert is the soul of Aristophanes *habitans in sicco*. He is as remorseless as the Greek satirist in the application to our sham virtues of the tests which separate the component parts and precipitate the hidden vice. He has, however, no purpose beyond provoking our laughter. That there is no such political significance in the satire as animates the defender of the Athenian republic may be attributed, in part, to changed conditions. There appears, however, to be in Mr. Gilbert no moral aim whatever. The lesson, if any, to be extracted from his plays is, that our nature is too pitiful to be redeemed, and that it is mere waste of time to sow the seed of virtue or improvement in a soil unfitted to receive it. In this respect he is less like Aristophanes than Swift. These things are not mentioned in condemnation of Mr. Gilbert or of his method, but in simple explanation. It is, of course, impossible, in dealing with characters every one of whom is despicable, to count on the slightest manifestation of sympathy from the audience. The experiment has rarely, if ever before, been made of supplying a drama in three acts in which there is not a single human being who does not proclaim himself absolutely detestable. In the present instance it has been made, and it is a success. So witty is the treatment that the piece, to those who are prepared to accept the author's standpoint, is one of the most mirthful and original that has, during late years,

been seen on the stage. In using the term "original" we may make a slight exception: Mr. Gilbert has stolen from no one except himself. In the character of Azéma in "The Palace of Truth" he has worked to a certain extent the vein he now again explores.

In his exponents he has been fairly happy. Mr. Honey, who plays the hero, is unsuited to the part. Miss Marion Terry's acting is, however, in its unconsciousness, the perfection of burlesque, and Miss Buckstone, Miss Julia Stewart, Mr. Howe, Mr. Dewar, and Mr. Kyrle realise fully the characters assigned them.

ACCORDING to a rumour, the source of which we are unable to trace, the new play of Lord Lytton, which was produced on Saturday last, belongs, in the order of its composition, to a period between the production of "Money" and that of "Not so Bad as We Seem". Four acts were finished, and then the author, unable, we may assume, to extricate his characters satisfactorily from the position in which they were placed, or not quite satisfied with the progress of the work so far as it had proceeded, laid it on one side, never to recommence it. A fifth act has now been supplied by Mr. Charles Coghlan, and the play has been produced with success at the Court. It is worthy of its author's reputation, and bears strong traces of his facile style of workmanship. The characters are familiar types, with that slight infusion of caricature which in comedy seems an advantage. They are thoroughly conventional, and yet highly effective. The dialogue is cynical and clever, but artificial, and the story is ingenious in construction without being original. As its faults are of a class that only interfere with its literary value, "The House of Darnley" is a distinct success. The story is that of a wife whose husband, wholly occupied in the task of making a fortune of most bubble-like brilliancy and

frailty, leaves her to herself, and so exposes her to the wooing of a too gallant and amorous cousin. Though innocent enough to compromise herself without knowing what she is doing, Lady Juliet Darnley is fond of her husband and child, and proof against the specious arguments of the would-be Lothario. It needs, accordingly, the intrusion of jealousy to bring matters to a crisis. Mortified at the contempt with which he has been treated by Darnley, who has been content by means of an apostrophe to show his wife the true character of her cousin, and has then left them together, Sir Francis Marsden tells Lady Juliet that the secret of her husband's *aplomb* is indifference, and gives her an address at which he tells her she will find his mistress. Her inquiries convince her that the accusation is well founded, and, after quitting her husband's roof for that of her father, the heroine seems rather disposed to avail herself of the form of revenge suggested to her by her cousin. Her lover is seen by Darnley at her feet, and the reconciliation, which has, of course, been inevitable from the first, is delayed. It comes when the wife finds that Darnley has been occupied in a task of mercy instead of an intrigue. An underplot, with even less originality than the main story, is connected with it. In this a young lady, compelled by her father's will to marry a man she dislikes or, by her refusal, to forfeit her fortune, tries through five acts to disgust him and make him accept a responsibility of breaking the engagement from which she shrinks. In pursuit of this object she appears in turn as a precisian and a hoyden.

Rather roughly fitted to the original is the head or the tail Mr. Coghlan has supplied. How careless is the workmanship, and how the action is arrested rather than completed, is clearly shown in the conduct of this underplot. Mr. Coghlan found to his hand a too persevering suitor, whose reluctance to wed a girl wholly unsuited to his tastes, manifested through four acts, has always

yielded to his interest and his indisposition to sacrifice a large sum of money dependent on his marriage. The way he has treated him has been to make him change his mind. Nothing, surely, could be more simple. He has, moreover, brought him nearer to the lady by putting into his mouth slang expressions, of which the man as conceived by Lord Lytton was wholly incapable. The manner of declining the honour of an alliance with Miss Placid consists in the utterance of the phrase, "Not if I know it". Here is a complete shirking of the responsibility of the work Mr. Coghlan has undertaken and an abandonment of the author's conception. Not much more successfully is the main action finished. The task undertaken, however, by Mr. Coghlan is, it must be confessed, of some difficulty.

To deal with the play as a whole, its chief fault is want of originality. When she tries to disgust her suitor, Miss Placid indulges in a rhapsody upon hunting which has been twice anticipated, first in the "Love Chase" and again in "London Assurance". The scene in which the husband holds up the lover to scorn and then leaves him with his wife has been given in "Love in a Maze," and the whole situation between *le mari, la femme, et l'amant* is as familiar as it can be.

Some of the characters are well-known stage types. The rich and energetic banker who is always on the verge of bankruptcy, and who, by writing a few letters, gets money enough to uphold the fortunes of a sinking house, puts in a constant appearance on the stage. Sir Francis is a commonplace seducer, and the woman to whom is due complete revelation of his baseness is an equally commonplace victim. Fyshe, a cold-blooded character, does not differ greatly from Dudley Smooth; and Mainwaring, a species of chorus to the action, is an English equivalent to Desgenais, in "Les Filles de Marbre". With all its faults on its head, "The House of Darnley"

is an effective comedy, and is a good specimen of Lord Lytton's powers. It is well mounted and is acted in capital style, so far as the chief characters are concerned, and with much *ensemble*. Miss Ellen Terry presented gracefully the heroine, and was supremely touching in the stronger scenes. Mr. Kelly displayed as the hero more power than he has previously exhibited. Mr. Hare and Mr. Bishop, with other members of the company, were good in various types of eccentricity, and the performance and the mounting were creditable to all concerned.

Jan. 19, 1878. IF in his drama of "Patrie" M. Sardou shows how valuable accessories to the playwright are the life and colour of past ages, the bustle of war, and the splendour of *quasi-mediæval* pageantry, he proves in "Dora" that modern existence, in spite of its placid exterior, is at bottom as stirring as that of more picturesque epochs. In the earlier and, on the whole, the greater work, he adds one more to the long list of romantic plays the present century has witnessed since the outbreak of literary fervour in France which established that country in the position of dramatic supremacy she at present enjoys. In the later, he gives to the stage the most powerful comedy of modern life that has yet been seen, and vindicates the fitness of existing society for the highest purposes of the dramatist. Though the most skilful as well as the most fervid and prolific of modern playwrights, M. Sardou has not yet passed out of the stage in which the influence of previous models asserts itself. As clearly as we can trace the source of inspiration in "Patrie" to M. Victor Hugo and the elder Dumas, or follow out what "Nos Intimes" or "Nos Bons Villageois" owes to the comedy of Barrière, can we trace the influence of Scribe in "Dora". This is, in some respects, a recurrence to an early style of its

author, some of whose youthful productions belong to the same school. In saying this we do not wish to detract from the merit of M. Sardou, who has outbraved much opposition, and has set his foot resolutely on the ladder leading to Olympus. While admitting, however, that "Dora" is a work of which, in its class, any dramatist might be proud, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that the framework of its story is such exactly as Scribe was accustomed to construct, and the means that lead to the discovery that brings about the *dénouement*, viz., the traces of a peculiar scent which a lady carries about with her, have just that element of artifice with which the comedy of Scribe was commonly and justly reproached.

In its English dress of "Diplomacy," M. Sardou's work moves easily enough. The adaptors have discharged their task competently, and have produced a play which, while it is suited to English requirements, is not less dramatic, less sympathetic, nor less powerful than the original. It might be maintained, indeed, that one at least of the alterations that have been made is an improvement. The success of the performance was complete; the hold of the drama upon the audience was never relaxed, and the stronger situations provoked loud outbursts of applause. It is satisfactory to add that the interpretation was worthy of the play. With a strangely novel sensation, and with a doubt whether we shall be believed to be speaking seriously, we yet affirm that the representation is as good as that which was seen a year ago at the Vaudeville, though the cast on the occasion last named included such artists as Mdlle. Blanche Pierson, Madame Alexis, MM. Parade, Pierre Berton, Dieudonné, and Train. So much may be accomplished with artists of no special gifts when a stage representation is treated seriously as art, and when the public is invited to a performance and not to a rehearsal. The story of "Diplomacy" deals with the adventures of a young Englishman who marries for love a

woman of dubious origin, and finds thrust upon him the conviction that she is a police spy in the pay of a foreign country. On the very day when he, by espousing her, raises her from a position of poverty, and almost dishonour, to one of affluence, she apparently robs him of a government despatch of which he is the bearer. He taxes her with guilt, and moves her to indignation instead of confession. In the end, by the aid of his brother, who is Secretary to the British Embassy at Paris, the mystery is cleared up, and the crime is traced to a rival of the heroine.

The first act of the English version, which includes two acts of the original, does little more than show the relations of the characters to each other, and prove to the audience how unpromising is the position from which the heroine is withdrawn. This act was found tedious by the audience. It would scarcely be so, however, where knowledge of the exigencies of art prevails and fair scope is accorded the dramatist to marshal his forces. Act the second contains the scene—the strongest in the play—in which the hero is first startled by the production of what seem to be proofs of his wife's guilt. That which follows is occupied with the interview between husband and wife which ends in their separation; and the concluding act shows the clearing up of what has been mysterious, and the reunion of the couple.

Three changes of importance are made. The first is an omission. A scene in which the heroine receives dis honouring proposals from a certain Stramir is described in narrative instead of in action. The man to whom the discovery of the true criminal is ascribable is the brother of the hero, instead of being a friend. He is also presented as a much more serious character. In the concluding scenes some sympathy is elicited for the woman whose disloyal and nefarious action is the cause of the catastrophe. These alterations are but a portion of those that are made. They are, however, typical. The first is regrettable, but is

indispensable if the play is to be reduced into four acts ; the second strengthens the *morale* of the piece as well as its interest ; the third is wrong, and is a concession to English weakness. Remarkable tact has been shown in the general task of adaptation, and the central figures are thoroughly and characteristically English.

Mr. Kendal revealed as *Capt. Beauclerc*, the hero, an amount of force that he has not previously displayed, and carried off the honours of the evening. Mrs. Kendal played *Dora* in her best manner, and realised fully the mingled humiliation and indignation beneath which the wronged wife is crushed. Mr. Clayton as *Mr. Beauclerc* was excellent, conveying always the idea of restrained force, and never for a moment forgetting his attitude of guardian of his brother's interests. Such instances of abnegation are rare on our stage. It is, however, in the series of smaller pictures that are presented the chief excellence of the play is found. None of these characters has, perhaps, any distinctly marked originality, yet all are good in their way. These were in every case fully realised. Mrs. Bancroft's *Comtesse Zicka*, the abtractor of the missing papers, was a capital picture in a line altogether unlike any in which the actress has previously been seen. Mr. Arthur Cecil's *Baron Stein*, a Russo-Teutonic spy and police-agent, was a capital picture. Not less good were the *Count Orloff* of Mr. Bancroft, the *Algic Fairfax* of Mr. Sugden, Miss Lethière's *Marquise de Rio-Zarès*, Miss Lamartine's *Lady Henry Fairfax*, and Miss Ida Hertz's *Mion*, a French maid. Each part was good in itself, and the whole was admirable in *ensemble*. The success that has been obtained is creditable in the highest degree to all concerned.

MR. BYRON'S pieces are the delight of the public, and Jan. 26, 1878.
the despair of the critic. They cannot be said to be

wholly without merit; while they answer the end for which they were written, and are all but invariably successful and remunerative. It is difficult, however, to see in what respect they approach art, or what single quality in them gives them a claim to serious attention. What has been said with comparatively little show of reason of Mr. Gilbert's "Engaged" holds true of Mr. Byron's comedies and comic dramas. They are burlesques in modern dress. The same jokes that are employed to season a travesty of some romantic legend constitute the comic dialogue of a drama of real life, and reason and probability are as completely scouted by a gentleman of the day in irreproachable costume as they are by a sham Hamlet or a mock Julius Cæsar. Not a pretence is made of assigning to a character any individuality. A hero of Mr. Byron's may be a baronet, a barrister, an officer, or whatever Mr. Byron may choose to dub him. It is the same individual, whatever he may be called. What, then, is the reason, since some reason must exist, why Mr. Byron's pieces have been the most successful of recent days? Their principal recommendation to the public consists in the fact that they overflow with animal spirits. They have a certain measure of domestic interest. The situations in which Mr. Byron places his heroes are natural and conceivable, though the actions he represents them as committing are extravagant and farcical. Add to this that the public has got into a way of listening for Mr. Byron's puns and applauding them, whether they are good, bad, or indifferent, and the only assignable causes of popularity are revealed. "A Fool and his Money," as the new play is not too appropriately entitled, differs in no important respect from a score of previous works from the same source. Its hero is a confidential servant who finds himself, through the will of a deceased master, the owner of a large property. Here is a natural and conceivable opening, and those who know the use Mr. Toole will make of such opportunities



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as are afforded him can see how much diversion may be afforded in the course of the piece. There is, however, an effort after a species of serious interest. Percival Ransome, the youth whom an absurd will of his uncle has deprived of estates now in the possession of the ex-butler, when he finds himself penniless, becomes in turn the servant to the man who has supplanted him, runs his errands, puts coal on the fire at his bidding, and performs other menial tasks. Not wholly for the sake of the income attached to the post does the youth undertake these unworthy functions. A girl he loves is coming to stay in the house, and sooner than miss seeing her he will present himself to her as a servant. Now love has made a man do more foolish things than disguise himself as a footman. It was while personating a waiter at an hotel that Christopher North won his bride. There is a difference, however, between pretending to be a servant and becoming one in reality. No man educated as a gentleman will place himself in a position of the kind. The moment, accordingly, a man is presented as doing this, the piece becomes farce. Farce accordingly "A Fool and his Money" must be pronounced. A way out of the position into which Mr. Byron has got his characters is found by upsetting the will on account of the mental incapacity of the testator. This arrangement seems to please rather than otherwise the man it dispossesses, whose negligence concerning his own affairs has been such he does not appear aware that the action by which he is denuded of his property has even commenced. Mr. Toole acted the hero of the piece with his usual drollery, and Mr. Righton presented well a pompous and not too scrupulous old gentleman.

REPRESENTATIONS of Shakspearian comedy have not Feb. 9, 1878.
seldom erred on the side of being broadly farcical. There
are certain plays, indeed, such as "The Taming of the

Shrew," "The Comedy of Errors," and "Twelfth Night," in which grace and beauty are ordinarily subordinated to excessive and preposterous fooling. All that can be said in defence of this system is that it is probably as old as Shakspeare. It is easy to imagine with what contempt for the "barren spectators" Shakspeare saw the very motive of "The Taming of the Shrew" destroyed by the absurd and preposterous business which had to be introduced to secure their approval. Once indeed, in Hamlet's advice to the players, he speaks his mind concerning the clowns who speak more than is set down for them: "That's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it". It is almost certain that the fooling still in use in the "Twelfth Night" dates back to the time of the Restoration. So many of the actors had died during the period of civil war, some of wounds received in fighting for the king, the rest from other causes, and so many had entirely withdrawn from the stage, that when, in 1660, the remains of the former companies reassembled at the Red Bull, under the management of Thomas Killigrew, they were scarcely enough in number to impose laws upon their new associates. It is easy to believe, however, that the anachronisms in the representation of "Twelfth Night" on which critics have often dwelt are as ancient as the play itself. The dramatist who peopled Illyria with characters so thoroughly English as Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Sir Toby Belch is not likely to have been disturbed concerning the kind of tobacco pipes which were placed in their hands.

The fact that an abuse may be as old as Shakspeare affords no reason why it should be tolerated. That a certain thing in a presentation of Shakspearian comedy is an anachronism will not, however, move the wrath of any critic who takes a common-sense view of the question of theatrical representations. The real objection to the kind of business preserved in the "Twelfth Night," in the

scenes between the two drunken knights, is that it is preposterous, unnatural, inartistic, and wholly out of keeping with the general scope of the play. In the representation with which we are now occupied the characters of the two knights were not, indeed, presented, Sir Toby Belch being replaced by Sir John Falstaff, and Sir Andrew Aguecheek appearing as Slender. In the part of the Clown the traditions of Tarlton or of Green are probably preserved. We have lost, however, the music, and the catch that was to "waken the night-owl" is now likely to conduce to sleep rather than wakefulness on the part of any creature less nocturnal in its habits. The farcical business customary in "*Twelfth Night*" is, indeed, thoroughly contemptible.

The more serious and imaginative portions of the play are fairly presented at the Haymarket. There are two conceptions of the character of Viola, either of which is defensible. There is the sentimental view, which links the character with Bellario or Euphrasia in the "*Philaster*" of Beaumont and Fletcher and other similar personages of the early drama, and there is the more realistic view, which makes her assumption of masculine attire something of a madcap freak. The latter view is that taken by Miss Neilson. It is fully borne out by the text. Viola falls in love with the Duke in the three months during which she is his confidante and messenger. It is absurd to suppose that love for a man she has never seen could have led her to the first assumption of masculine attire. The words, moreover, spoken to her by Olivia show that she put on with Rosalind "a swashing and a martial outside". Olivia charges her with having been saucy, and tells her she "began rudely". Viola's address to Maria, "No, good swabber, I am to hull here a little longer," affords no especial proof of timidity of demeanour. It is only, then, in her graver moments, and when in presence of her lord, that Viola shows the sentimental aspect

of her character. Like the Di Vernon of Scott, she can melt into tenderness, but her general mood is one of almost saucy defiance. Miss Neilson presents this character to the life. She has every physical qualification for the part, and looks surprisingly attractive in her Greek costume. She enjoys thoroughly the confusion her assumption of manly dress creates, and her delight when she finds herself taken for a man by Olivia is infectious. Not less happy is she in the more serious passages, the grace and delicacy of the play being, so far as the scenes in which she appears are concerned, fully preserved. Thus, though the impersonation may not compare with the Juliet or even with the Rosalind of the same actress, it is distinctly worthy of her reputation, both as regards insight and expository ability. Mr. Conway was excellent as *Sebastian*, and Mr. Kyrle scarcely less good as the *Duke*. The *Maria* of Miss Kate Phillips was also satisfactory. Miss Ernstone as *Olivia*, and Mr. Howe as *Malvolio*, are two good actors wholly out of place.

Mar. 2, 1878. THE success of Mr. Gilbert's plays has kept alive the faith of those who "against hope" have hoped in the future of the English drama. That one of them should collapse in representation would, a week ago, have seemed scarcely conceivable. A barren success has before now been their fate, for the public to which the best appeal is limited, since no small section of the world, and even of the educated world, has no comprehension of humour. It is, indeed, amusing to hear the kind of comment provoked from matter-of-fact people by the success of such pieces as "Pygmalion and Galatea" or "Engaged". Until Monday last, however, Mr. Gilbert could console himself with the thought that the public he sought to please had derived a gratification from his work all the more acute on account of the conditions under which it was won, and

the clamour from certain quarters with which it was accompanied. "The Ne'er-do-Weel" failed to please the strongest admirers of Mr. Gilbert's art, and roused to a display of absolute animosity that first-night public which has hitherto regarded him with favour. Mr. Gilbert may find consolation in the fact that the causes of his non-success are easily seen, and once seen are easily avoided.

Mr. Gilbert's previous good fortune has done much to mislead him in the present instance. He has seen works which resemble "The Ne'er-do-Weel" in important respects obtain a hold upon the public, and he has failed to perceive that two styles which are satisfactory when apart may be unsatisfactory when blended. The serious interest in "The Ne'er-do-Weel" is as strong as that in "Engaged," and its comic scenes are not more extravagant than those in "Trial by Jury". Fun, however, which is suited to a burlesque opera is of small account in a serious play, and thinness of plot, while it passes unnoticed in a satire, may yet prove fatal in a more ambitious work. This is the plain lesson of "The Ne'er-do-Weel". As regards language and character-painting it may compare with any previous work of Mr. Gilbert's. We are not sure, indeed, that one of the characters it introduces, Major O'Hara, is not the most genuinely comic character he has yet invented. Still the story is far too wire-drawing for a three-act play, in which the lighter scenes are not self-supporting, and these, instead of being a prop to the piece, proved a weight sufficient to drag it down.

In more than one instance Mr. Gilbert seems to have fallen under his own spells, and to have become the slave of his own work. Charming as are the love-scenes in "The Ne'er-do-Weel," and they would have been sufficient to have floated a vessel less badly freighted, they are too strongly coloured with the influence of "The Palace of Truth". There are in the play three female characters,

all of whom make unsolicited avowal of love. Circumstances diminish in each case the importance of this action,—still, there it is. Miss Parminter, an old maid, makes direct love to two, if not three, characters. Jessie O'Hara, a timid little maiden, tells her love to Gerard Seton, who had never done more than make himself her confidant; and Maud Callender, the heroine, avows her enduring affection for a man who has, indeed, previously been affianced to her, but who is, at that very moment, pleading warmly the cause of another. Now none will contest the fact that circumstances arise which make a woman proclaim her love, and justify her in so doing. Conditions of this kind are, moreover, exactly suited to the dramatist. Still the device must not be vulgarised. Mr. Gilbert has employed it with signal effect. We can recall two or three delicious scenes in his plays in which, by a power of which they are unconscious, women find their native modesty overcome, and make frank and free exposition of virginal longings and scarcely formed aspirations. When the force is extra-human that produces this effect the most squeamish delicacy is satisfied. We do not, however, seek a gallery of these demonstrative heroines, and feel inclined to exclaim :—

The apple that melts without squeezing
Is rather too mellow for me.

It is doubtful whether any amount of alteration will greatly benefit "The Ne'er-do-Weel". Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Neville will probably do well to accept the first night's verdict. The former will have no difficulty in obtaining with another play an ample revenge; the latter has pieces in his *répertoire* that will be more remunerative than this. The acting and mounting left little to desire. Mr. Neville has never been seen to greater advantage than as *Jeffrey Rollestane*, the Ne'er-do-Weel. Miss Marion Terry, Mr. Anson, Mr. Forbes Robertson, and other members of the

company acquitted themselves well, and the piece would have been saved if acting of any kind could have rendered it attractive.

THE conclusion established by Mr. Irving's success in Mar. 16, 1878. "Louis XI." is the same to which all recent experience has pointed, namely, that what is known as character acting has definitely established its supremacy in England upon the ruins of tragic art. Putting on one side Macready, whose triumphs in such parts as Werner and Virginius are already remote and scarcely remembered, and dealing with the most successful actors the present generation has known, we have witnessed the highest honours bidden for and all but conquered by Charles Kean, Mr. Phelps, and Mr. Irving. Not one of these has left behind him any memories or inspired any strong interest in those tragic parts in which it is the natural and legitimate ambition of an actor to shine. Who speaks of the Othello, or the Macbeth, or the Richard, even, of any actor subsequent to Edmund Kean? Hamlet may almost be considered a character part. It is because it is such that no actor, according to a stage assertion, ever fails in it. Turning to the actors mentioned, we ask: In what *rôles* have their reputations been most firmly established? The answer is prompt. Charles Kean is best remembered as Louis XI. and Mephistophiles; Mr. Phelps as Shallow and Bottom, with, perhaps, Cardinal Wolsey; while Mr. Irving, if we shut out his early career, will be found to have acquired his highest triumph as Matthias in "The Bells," Eugene Aram, and Louis XI.

We would not discourage dramatic aspirants from aiming at the most exalted success. Still the facts we give are established on conclusive evidence. In Germany the same thing is taking place. If German actors would come here and play Shakspearian comedy they would

interest the public. They bring over tragedy, and they fail just as our own tragedians fail. In France, even, the very home of acting, tragedy, since the appearance of romantic drama, has decayed; while in Italy such success as is obtained in tragedy comes as a result of removing from it the customary accessories and putting entirely on one side both mask and buskin and all conventional apparel.

Mr. Irving's triumph in *Louis XI.*, the most decisive he has yet won, is established most firmly in those portions of the performance in which he recedes furthest from the tragic method. The play in which he appeared is but a second-class work; but it has the strong recommendation to an actor that it contains but one part. In the days of Charles Kean it used to be said, jocosely of course, that that actor wished to see his company reduced to himself and a ballet. This object is nearly attained in "*Louis XI.*," where, after the principal personage has once appeared, he retains possession of the stage and stands in front of accessories who serve no purpose but to put his figure into bolder relief. The one misfortune in the play is that the character is monotonous. There is nothing splendid or soldierly about *Louis XI.* as there is about *Richard III.* Casimir Delavigne—who, as well as being hide-bound in the writing of verse, was destitute of invention, imitating in turns Byron in "*Marino Faliero*," Scott in "*Louis XI.*," Shakspere in "*Les Enfants d'Edouard*" and the conclusion of "*Louis XI.*," Piron in "*Les Comédiens*," Kotzebue in "*L'Ecole des Vieillards*," Bernardin de Saint-Pierre in "*Le Paria*," and Victor Hugo in "*La Fille du Cid*"—adhered too closely in the play to the character of *Louis* as extracted by Scott from *Commines*. Despicable as he was in many respects, *Louis* was not the coward he is depicted. In his early life he commanded armies and fought vigorously, and in his later years the eagerness for life he displayed was

less a result of poltroonery than a superstitious dread of what would follow death. No such agonies of remorse as beset his deathbed in the play, and no such horrors as, according to Webster, "wait on princes," attended in fact his departure. According to Commines—

Après tant de peur, de suspicion, de douleur, Notre Seigneur fit miracle sur lui, et le guérit tant de l'âme que du corps, comme toujours a accoutumé en faisant ses miracles; car il l'osta de ce misérable monde en grande santé de sens et d'entendement, et en bonne mémoire, ayant reçu tous ses sacrements sans souffrir douleur que l'on connût, mais toujours parlant jusqu'à une *Patre Nostre* avant sa mort. . . . Et disoit que il n'esperoit à mourir qu'au samedy et que Notre-Dame lui procureroit ceste grâce, en qui toujours avoit eu fiance et grande dévotion et prière, et tout ainsi, il advint; car il déceda le samedy pénultième jour d'août; a huit heures au soir, en répétant ces paroles: "Notre-Dame d'Embrun, ma bonne maîtresse, aidez moi".

The right of the dramatist to take what view he chooses of an historical character is not disputed. It may, however, be doubted whether Delavigne has done well in darkening further the picture already sufficiently dark of Scott. It is possible, indeed, that Mr. Boucicault might with advantage have taken for the basis of his play not the "Louis XI." of Delavigne, which was given at the Théâtre Français on the 11th February, 1832, but the "Louis XI." of M. Mély-Janin, played at the same house, with not less success, five years previously, viz., the 15th February, 1827. The last-named piece was extracted from the novel of Scott, and dealt wholly with the captivity of Louis at Peronne. Be this as it may, the fact remains that the representation of "Louis XI." grows wearisome towards the end, in spite of the brilliant exhibition of talent made by the principal actor.

In the early acts Mr. Irving is seen to highest advantage. The representation of the cowardly, ferocious, and bigoted monarch, alternately menacing with his fierce and wolfish wrath those who offend him, and coaxing and cajoling those from whom he has anything to gain, is one of the most carefully thought-out conceptions the modern

stage has seen. If towards the close it does not inspire the same interest, it is, as we have said, because the character itself lacks variety, and is too constantly ignoble, and because the actor in the stronger scenes relapses into old and intolerable faults. The points at which he does this are few. The whole death-scene is, however, ultra-realistic, and belongs to that false school in art which assumes that the physical agonies of dissolution are to be portrayed in their naked reality. It is not to justify this school to say that the highest genius of the day belongs to it, and that Signora Ristori and Signor Salvini are its most illustrious pupils. There are those who remember actors still greater than these who could produce results more powerful as well as more artistic, with no such expenditure of means. There was a tremendous display of power in the closing scenes of the fourth and the fifth acts. These acts, however, were comparatively ineffective. In earlier scenes there were no signs whatever of effort, and in these the greatest and most undisputed triumph was obtained. There is no need to dwell upon single blemishes or shortcomings in the case of a performance like this. It is pleasanter to admit frankly that, so far as concerns the conception of the character, especially on its comic side, it is worthy of warm praise. The laugh at once senile and ferocious, the movements indicative of meditation, and the employment of Louis's manifold resources of cajolery were excellent in all respects. Very striking, too, were the dramatic contrasts afforded. The presentation may be considered Mr. Irving's highest accomplishment.

Capital support was afforded as regards the scenic accessories, and the tragic and sinister surroundings of the life of Louis were well shown. Much of the acting was wretched, however,—so deficient in spirit and life that, had the chief person been less powerfully presented, the success of the venture would have been compromised.

IT may be doubted whether the amount of success that Mar. 30, 1878. has attended Mr. Gilbert's effort to reconstruct and rewrite a drama which at its first appearance failed to please the public is sufficiently great to recommend the proceeding to general imitation. By dexterous steering the rocks that arrested former progress have been avoided, an intricate channel has been threaded, and the vessel has been guided into port. What is questionable is, however, the worth of the salvage. For a playwright of Mr. Gilbert's fertility, a more remunerative plan would have been to abandon "The Ne'er-do-Weel" as a derelict, and to charter a new vessel with a fresh cargo. "The Vagabond," as the new version is called, is a success so far as the verdict of the public is concerned. It may even hope to hold its place in the bills of the theatre until the management is reimbursed for the outlay. It can never hope, however, to occupy a place with its author's best work, having neither the strength nor the shapeliness of the plays by which Mr. Gilbert is known and judged.

In removing two or three comic scenes and one objectionable character Mr. Gilbert has scarcely touched the main action. So episodical were these, he has been able to lop them off. He has, however, for independent reasons, changed the relations of the more serious characters, and has presented his hero in a more satisfactory light. Instead of yielding up to a mistaken sense of obligation the woman he loves, his "vagabond" now holds to her *quand même*, and those who in the former piece strove to sponge upon his weakness or his good nature have now to reconcile themselves as best they may to his triumph. What is felt, however, is that the motive thus obtained is too slight for three acts. In place of the comic scenes which disappear, there is now an augmented quantity of love-making, which, in spite of the talent of the exponents, is not quite sympathetic. The reason for this is probably supplied in the fact that the fault we pointed out in "The

Ne'er-do-Weel," of too much of the love-making being assigned the female characters, is even more apparent in "The Vagabond". So thoroughly are the ordinary relations of the sexes reversed, we feel at the close of the piece as if Mr. Gilbert's ironical vein had asserted itself in his own despite, and a satire upon the advocates of "woman's rights" had intruded into scenes the obvious intention of which was sentimental. Of the love-making, moreover, which does not proceed from women, a considerable portion is vicarious, the result being that an impression of general want of manliness and healthiness is conveyed. "The Vagabond" may accordingly be pronounced an elaborate and artificial idyl of love, with a story more fitted to form the basis of a masque, or some entertainment of the class, than a comedy of real life. Such comic characters as remain are improved. Captain O'Hara, who, on the strength of thirty-two years spent in voyaging in Arctic seas, arrogates to himself an exhaustive knowledge of human nature, and especially of feminine nature, is cleverly sketched, and his efforts to deal with the problems that perplex feminine bosoms are diverting. It might, however, be said, without any undue amount of cynicism, that the consideration for his niece's feelings which underlies his clumsy attempts at diplomacy is wholly uncalled for, the lady herself being burdened with no superfluous delicacy in such matters. Miss Parminter is also more accentuated, and correspondingly more comic. Miss Brennan, the new exponent of this personage, gives a rendering which is more effective, if more conventional, than that previously seen. So far as regards the remaining characters, the performance differs but little from that formerly described. Mr. Neville appeared uncertain at one or two points, and it also seemed as if some aspects of the character she presented were perplexing to Miss Marion Terry. Both, however, acted with sincerity and capacity, that contributed largely to the success of the

entertainment. Mr. Forbes Robertson was not less satisfactory than before, and Mr. Anson was more successful. Miss Gerard, in a little outburst of tenderness in the first act, fairly carried away the sympathies of the audience. It is pardonable in so young an actress to return on the stage in the middle of a scene to acknowledge the plaudits bestowed upon her, but the practice is objectionable to the last degree. A public with any knowledge of art would not thus interfere with its own enjoyment, and an artist with a due regard to her own fame would refuse obedience to such a summons. This is a commonplace of criticism, but frequent repetition of commonplaces does not, as experience shows, suffice to establish their importance.

CURIOS proof how strong a hold upon the public has April 6, 1878.
been taken by Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield" is afforded by the fact that no less than five separate versions of one of the least dramatic of stories have at different times been put upon the stage. Thomas Dibdin first produced, during his management of the Surrey, a burletta founded upon the tale and named after it. The date of this is assumably about 1820. Three years later a version was given at the Haymarket, with Terry as *Dr. Primrose*, Liston as *Moses*, and Mrs. Orger as *Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs*. In 1850 an adaptation, ascribed in the acting copy to Sterling Coyne, was played at the same theatre, with Mr. Webster as *Dr. Primrose*, Mr. Buckstone as *Moses*, Vandenhoff as *Squire Thornhill*, Mr. Howe as *Ephraim Jenkinson*, Mrs. Keeley as *Mrs. Primrose*, Miss Reynolds as *Olivia*, and Miss P. Horton as *Lady Blarney*. Immediately after its production, another version, by Mr. Tom Taylor, was given at the Strand, the elder Farren playing the *Vicar*, and Mrs. Stirling, if we remember rightly, *Olivia*. This last-named piece is the same which, with some alterations, has been revived at the Aquarium.

Lastly comes Mr. Wills's version of "Olivia," produced at the Court.

In dealing with a work that has been so frequently adapted, Mr. Wills has departed widely from his predecessors, with the result of producing a play which, while it has no pretension to be a faithful version of the original, is in all dramatic and artistic respects a great advance upon its predecessors. Casting on one side, with a curious disregard of popular associations, the adventures of Moses at the fair, omitting all mention of Ephraim Jenkinson, the forerunner of a host of clever vagabonds, and dealing only with the temptation, fall, and recovery of Olivia, Mr. Wills has produced a touching and effective play, which, in spite of its idyllic character and its monotony of treatment, has genuine dramatic merit. Two previous works run, to some extent, parallel with it: the first, "L'Ami Fritz" of MM. Erckmann-Chatrian; and the second, Mr. Wills's own play of "Charles the First". The play first named it recalls in the simplicity and beauty of its pictures of rustic life and homely virtues; the second it resembles in the method of treatment, in which the eye is called to the aid of the ear, and the story is told almost as much by pictures as by dialogue.

It is at once obvious that a story such as "The Vicar of Wakefield" lends itself easily to the method of treatment indicated. So successful has been in this instance the employment of it, a play which claims only to be founded on an incident in "The Vicar of Wakefield," and is, except at a few points, wholly original in dialogue, retains more of the atmosphere of the story than pieces which are avowedly built upon it, and reproduce textually its language.

An opening act shows the vicarage, where the rustics assemble, with vocal and instrumental music, to congratulate the Primroses upon their silver wedding. Everything tells of comfort and ease. Ripe apples weigh

down the overladen boughs, and are, in an exquisite scene, shaken by Sophia into the lap of her admirer, Burchell. The young urchins clamber furtively up the ladder, and pluck the tempting fruit. A cask of beer is broached in the adjoining yard, Moses superintending its distribution, while Olivia, half-longingly, half-petulantly, looks down the lane for her lover, who comes not. In his place come tidings of ruin, brought by Farmer Flamborough, which the Vicar strives vainly to keep from his family. In the second act a scene more exquisite still shows Dr. Primrose and his wife sitting over the fire, while Sophia, Moses, and Mr. Burchell sing a delightful part-song to the accompaniment of a spinet. Through the window we catch a glimpse of the face, white, scared, and tearful, of Olivia, hastening to an assignation with her lover, and looking upon a scene she fears she never again may contemplate. A third act shows the revelation to Olivia of the trick to which she has fallen victim, and her meeting with her father, while a short fourth act brings the fugitive home, and conducts her husband penitent to her feet. How little of the original there is in this is at once obvious. Scarcely one of the characters is such as Goldsmith conceived him. This, however, is wholly unimportant. What *is* important is that we have a charmingly idyllic play, thoroughly fresh in motive and sympathetic in treatment. The scenes indicated, those in which Olivia takes leave of her mother and her family, in which she defies and repels her treacherous lover, and in which she meets her father, are touching and poetical in a high degree. The language is in Mr. Wills's happiest vein, and the piece is harmonious throughout. That the second act is stronger than the third, which in turn is stronger than the fourth, shows that "Olivia" is rather a poetical play than a well-constructed drama. It is possible to improve greatly the second act by concluding it with the picture, previously described, of Olivia gazing through the window. An

audience such as can enjoy the piece will experience no difficulty in imagining the scene which follows the detection of Olivia's flight. By some acceleration of the action this, indeed, might come upon the picture.

So much pains have been bestowed upon the mounting and interpretation, that both stand out conspicuous in modern art. The scenery and dresses, the latter designed by Mr. Marcus Stone, are admirable in every respect, while the *ensemble* is so good that, for the first time in our recollection upon an English stage, we see actors and supernumeraries taking intelligent cognisance of what is going on before them or showing in their actions the individuality belonging to the characters they play. In the principal characters the performance was eminently satisfactory. Miss Terry was altogether lifelike as *Olivia*, and much of her business was extremely natural and touching. It was full of suggestion, and in one point at least, when she repelled the further advances of the man who had wronged her, it touched absolute greatness. Mr. Vezin's *Vicar of Wakefield* had none of the unction of the character as seen in Goldsmith, but was a full realisation of that imagined by Mr. Wills. In intelligence the rendering was up to Mr. Vezin's level; in intensity it surpassed anything he has exhibited. A scene in the third act, in which the father, commencing to reprimand, bursts into tears and embraces his daughter, was quite admirable. The *Moses* of Mr. Norman Forbes, the *Squire Thornhill* of Mr. Terriss, and the *Leigh* of Mr. Denison were deserving of high praise.

THE version of "The Vicar of Wakefield" given at the Aquarium seems coarse beside Mr. Wills's workmanship. It gives, however, a good idea of the original, and is fairly

entertaining. Mr. Farren's *Vicar* is strong in parts, though it is not the Vicar of Oliver Goldsmith. On the other hand, the *Mrs. Primrose* of Mrs. Sterling is to the life the fussy, vain, managing woman described. Miss M. Litton plays with much feeling as *Olivia*, and Mr. Emery as *Jenkinson*, Mr. Day as *Moses*, Mr. Edgar as *Burchell*, and Mr. Conway as the *Squire* make up a cast of great interest.

MISS NEILSON'S performance of *Juliet* has altered in some important respects. The early scenes are less accentuated than before, the whole dialogue of the balcony scene being delivered with the bated breath natural under the circumstances, when detection means the death of her lover. This is something more than a concession to realism, since there is a distinct gain to the entire performance from the heightened contrast thus obtained between separate portions of the representation. It has long been an assumption on the part of actors that they are allowed, at the time they are most anxious to escape observation, to express passion in tones that could not fail to arouse it. Without entering on the question how far this conventional treatment is to be defended, it may be said that a more natural method is in the present case of highest advantage. The poetry and fragrance of the balcony scene are greatly enhanced. The general rendering of *Juliet* retains its former characteristics of intensity and passion to a degree that leaves it unapproached on the modern English stage.

CHAPTER XII.

Royalty : “*Nell Gwynne*,” comedy in four acts by W. G. Wills.—*Princess’s* : “*Elfinella*,” comedy in four acts by Ross Neil ; “*Vanderdeckun*,” drama in four acts by W. S. Wills and Percy Fitzgerald.—*Olympic* : “*Love or Life*,” drama in three acts by Tom Taylor and Paul Mezitt.—*Haymarket* : “*The Hornet’s Nest*,” comedy in four acts by Henry J. Byron ; “*Conscience Money*,” play in three acts by Henry J. Byron.—*Folly* : “*The Idol*,” comedy in three acts by Charles Wyndham.—*Drury Lane* : “*The Winter’s Tale*”.—*Aquarium* : “*The Liar*” ; “*Grandfather Whitehead*”.—*Lyceum* : “*Hamlet*”.—*Olympic* : “*Gretchen*,” drama in four acts by W. S. Gilbert.

May 4, 1878. AMONG those pictures drawn by Pepys in his Diary which, better almost than the paintings of Sir Peter Lely, convey to us an idéa of the court of Charles the Second, none is more lifelike than that of Nell Gwynne. Whether he sees her “standing at her lodgings’ door in Drury Lane in her smock sleeves and bodice looking upon one,” or with another equally “bold merry slut” sitting in the box at the “King’s playhouse” and “laughing there upon people,” Pepys remains enamoured of Nell Gwynne, and finds her always a “mighty pretty creature”. Recollections of the kiss she bestowed upon him in the green-room of the theatre, in the presence, be it remembered, of his wife, seem to have coloured all his thoughts concerning

her. From Pepys Mr. Wills has apparently taken his play. He has given the madcap heroine a certain measure of sympathy, by making her urge on the King measures calculated to augment his own dignity or afford his subjects relief. In other respects he has left Nell as Pepys has described her, and he has kept the diarist close at her elbow to chronicle her doings.

The plot of "*Nell Gwynne*" is, of course, fictitious. In Pepys, however, may be found the separate incidents which Mr. Wills has welded together—the influence of Nelly over the King, Buckingham's treachery and confession, and the anger of Nell's actor lover when Lord Buckhurst, as the forerunner of royalty, deprives him of her favours. For this actor, Hart, Mr. Wills has substituted an imaginary character, one George Selwyn, whose attachment to Nell is supposed long to survive her acceptance of royal bounty. Lord Buckhurst of course disappears. By combining with Buckingham's conspiracy an attempt on his part to bring shame on Nell, and with it her banishment from court, wherein she keeps a sharp-witted and intelligent watch over the King's safety, Mr. Wills has fabricated a fairly effective plot. His means are commonplace enough, turning, as in the early comedy of Scribe, upon people putting letters into wrong envelopes, and the like. The result is, however, a success, a bright and taking comedy of intrigue being obtained. In this is much witty and highly effective dialogue. There are redundancies to be lopped, and other faults to be remedied. As a whole, however, "*Nell Gwynne*" is worthy of Mr. Wills's reputation, and may rank as high accomplishment. Miss Fowler grasped thoroughly the character of Nell Gwynne, and gave it with remarkable archness of manner and artistic feeling. In appearance and in the way in which she depicted each changing mood of one who might have been a goddess of caprice, Miss Fowler was equally excellent. Mr. Leathes was

King Charles the Second; Mr. Vaughan, *Buckingham*; Mr. Vollaire, *Pepys*; Mr. Brooke, *Selwyn*; and Mr. Carne, *Sir Peter Lely*.

June 15, 1878. IN language which is fairly vigorous and appropriate, but has no special claim to poetical beauty, Mr. Ross Neil tells in "Elfinella" a tender and not undramatic story. The lesson he teaches is that sorrow and death, which men regard as the curses of life, are blessings in disguise, and that a joyous immortality, such as is attributed to fairies, may be profitably exchanged for the brief life of mortals, glorified as this is by love, and crowned by death, the commencement of new and more vigorous life. Rarely before has it occurred to any poet to regard human and fairy natures from this standpoint. According to previous assumption the fairies sought before all things to free the changelings from traces of earth, dipping them, according to Beaumont and Fletcher, "in virtuous wells," for the purpose of setting them

Free
From dying flesh and dull mortality.

Gay makes a fairy protest against the very theory of changelings, and asks:—

Whence sprang the vain conceited lie
That we the world with fools supply?
What! give our sprightly race away
For the dull helpless sons of clay!
Besides, by partial fondness shown,
Like you we dote upon our own.
Wherever yet was found a mother
Would give her booby for another?
And should we change with human breed,
Well might we pass for fools indeed.

An experiment not wholly unlike that Mr. Ross Neil has conducted to a successful termination has also been undertaken by George Sand, in "Le Drac," a dramatic

story founded on a Provençal belief, and included in the "Théâtre de Nohant". The "Drac" is a species of sea deity, a marine Puck. Smitten with love for a peasant girl, he quits his home and takes the shape of a lad who has been drowned. Under this disguise he makes love to the heroine, and is rejected by her in favour of another lover. At first he punishes her. Gradually, however, he is won to the knowledge that the triumph of love consists in self-abnegation. Through the agency of love he is so purified as to win back his fairy virtue, which the association with humanity involved in assuming a mortal shape had clouded.

It is paying Mr. Ross Neil high praise to say that his story is as delicate and fragrant as that of George Sand. It is, moreover, even more dramatic. There is something very attractive in the contemplation of a creature such as the heroine, who, like the Galatea of Mr. Gilbert's fairy comedy, comes upon earth a woman, with everything concerning earth to learn. Seldom, too, has the devotion of love been shown more convincingly than when Elfinella, to whom the very name of death suggests unutterable horror, at last chooses and embraces the destiny from which she shrinks, that so doing she may share the fate of the man she has learned to love. Every phase of her subjugation is shown with dramatic force, and the entire work is made up of material which, judiciously used, would stimulate an audience. That the first production was not a success was mainly attributable to illness on the part of the principal exponent. Miss Heath, who played Elfinella, had long been ill. Her convalescence was far from assured at the time she undertook the task of playing the part. As a consequence she broke down completely, and the slowness of the interpretation was dangerous, if not fatal, to the chance of the piece. This is the more to be regretted as Miss Heath's conception of the character was attractive and

poetical, and the wonderment of the creature thus strangely placed was exhibited with remarkable skill. When the whole acting is quickened and the piece is shortened, a performance such as she will be able to give should attract all lovers of art. Mr. Warner and Miss Dolores Drummond played important characters.

IN supplying a new version of the legend of the Flying Dutchman and the

Phantom ship whose form
Shoots like a meteor through the storm
When the dark seud comes driving hard,
* * * * *
The harbinger of wreck and woe,

Messrs. Wills and Percy Fitzgerald have adhered more closely to the idealised fable of "Der Fliegende Holländer" than to the older story which underlies the musical burletta of Fitzball, produced at the Adelphi. Mr. Fitzgerald is, we understand, responsible for the construction of the play, which bears a strong likeness to the libretto of "Le Vaisseau Fantôme," and Mr. Wills for the poetical adornment it receives. A grim, mysterious, and impressive play has been produced. Some powerful scenes, to which full justice has been done, are set in the framework of the story; and some language which is at once nervous and poetical is supplied. Like all preceding versions, however, this adaptation loses what is most impressive in the original. There is something about the restlessness of these doomed sailors, hailing constantly the passing vessel, and requesting the crew to take home letters to a world which has forgotten them, that is strangely weird and poetical. The lesson is that of self-devotion,—it might, indeed, be said of self-immolation. From her youth Thekla, the heroine, has felt herself prompted by mysterious solicitation or warning to await some call of fate or duty in connection with a portrait that has been discovered

in her father's house. Weary at length of delay she consents to a betrothal to a handsome young sailor, which is pressed upon her by her father. Before the ceremony is concluded Vanderdecken appears. With no expression of wonderment or of coyness, but, indeed, with a complete possession which conquers every maidenly instinct, Thekla surrenders to the man she has so long expected. Disregarding all human ties, she goes with him on board the

Fatal and perfidious bark,
Built i' the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,

and accepts at once the task allotted her of dying in order to remove from her companion the curse of sailing on to the Judgment Day, a punishment for blasphemy which nothing but a sacrifice such as she makes can avert.

Here is the essential portion of the story, a scene of a duel between Vanderdecken and Olof, the betrothed of Thekla, in which the young sailor worsts his ghostly rival and precipitates him into the sea, being inserted for the mere purpose of supplying a dramatic situation, and affording room for a "sensation" effect, in which the Flying Dutchman, under a curse like that of Kehama,—

And water shall hear me,
And know thee, and fly thee.

—is rejected by the ocean, and recommences his courtship of Thekla.

It would be easy to show that the treatment of the fable is inferior to the fable itself. Grotesque as it appears, "Vanderdecken" has genuine power and character. It is, however, humiliating to see a man who bears a charmed life, and is a victim foredoomed of eternal vengeance, defeated and thrown from a cliff by a purely human antagonist, and then sent back wringing wet to recommence his ghostly but abominably selfish mission. All attempts hitherto made to connect a *quasi-domestic* interest with the story have been, from the poetical

standpoint, failures; and the only part of the play that approaches the terror of the original is the ballad of Mr. Wills, in which the story of Vanderdecken is told. Mr. Irving's appearance was splendidly picturesque and impressive, his aspect in the stronger scenes being absolutely lurid. His performance is, however, wanting in variety, and is marred by the peculiarities which in "Louis XI." he appeared to have shaken off. If the play succeeds it must be on the strength of its weirdness and the admirable scenery supplied it. Mr. Irving's performance will certainly not rank with his best efforts.

AT so much length has Crabbe told the tale of Rachel and her lovers, that Messrs. Taylor and Meritt, in fitting it to the stage, have had little to do but adhere to the incidents they found to their hands. Crabbe's very words are more than once employed, and the sequence of events is the same he supplies. In its outlines the story of the two brothers who loved the same woman, and died assumably by each other's hands, in a combat between gamekeepers and poachers, is true, having been supplied to Crabbe by Sir Samuel Romilly. The curious compact by which the heroine, as the price of saving her lover's life, agrees to marry his brother, whose evidence, which no less price will purchase, can exonerate the poacher from a charge he has previously incurred, is also founded on the original. Beyond fixing the scene of the drama on a portion of the coast between Sussex and Dorset, and introducing a few subordinate characters, there has been little for the adaptors to do. They have, however, for the sake of convenience, presented the heroine—whom they have rechristened Hester Midhurst—as the daughter of an innkeeper instead of a cotter; they have lengthened the period between the escape of the poacher from gaol and that in which the rivals again meet; and they have, lastly, killed one of the brothers only at the end; have

brought the poacher home, a reformed character, from sea, to which he is supposed to have been shipped by means of a press-gang ; have sent him to the scene of combat to protect his brother's life, and not to raise his hand against it ; and have made the dying man express penitence for having separated the lovers, and join their hands before he expires. These changes are justifiable enough, the result being a drama which has some strong and thrilling scenes, and an action fairly interesting throughout. The whole is, however, gloomy and monotonous, and the termination is weak, unsatisfactory, and unsympathetic.

Much care has been bestowed upon the new characters introduced. One of these, a cripple, with an absolutely demoniac delight in mischief, is forcibly conceived by the authors, and not less forcibly played by Mr. Pateman. Launce Midhurst, the publican, with his irrepressible sympathy with poachers and smugglers, and Peter Foxcote, a travelling pedlar, are clever and lifelike. Mr. Neville as the poacher, and Mr. Billington as the game-keeper, presented forcibly the two brothers ; Mrs. Billington playing the heroine, and Miss Kate Phillips an attendant. The interpretation by these artists, by Mr. Forbes Robertson and Mr. Flockton, was satisfactory. The chief drawback from the success of the piece is the total absence of that lighter element the public affects in melodrama ; its chief merit consists in the manner in which the life of a hundred years ago is reproduced.

IN estimating the value of a piece such as "The Hornet's Nest" of Mr. Byron, produced on Monday at the Hay-market Theatre, it is but just to the author to take into account the aim with which it was written. In this, and in previous pieces of the same description, Mr. Byron seems to have intended to supply a class of work that, so far as regards its power of creating mirth, may vie with

the latest comedies of M. Hennequin or MM. Meilhac and Halévy. In all that concerns art, whether in respect to construction or situation, the Englishman comes as far behind his French rivals as a British manufacturer of nicknacks lags behind a Chinese or a Japanese workman. He is, however, entitled to the praise of having produced a play which, while it excites peals of inextinguishable laughter, is a very model of propriety and decorum. This merit may not be high. It is, however, genuine in its class, and is not so common as it may be supposed. Those who can keep us laughing are few, and those among them still fewer whose satire or whose humour is wholly playful and harmless. A piece that needs an apology is, of course, weak. "The Hornet's Nest" is weak for Mr. Byron, which is saying a good deal, since of his numerous plays there are not more than three or four that have any claim to serious consideration.

In "The Hornet's Nest," then, first produced with indifferent success in New York, and now given for the first time in England, Mr. Byron has supplied a play that from one point of view is invertebrate and from another incoherent. Still, he has furnished Mr. Sothern with a comical character, and in so doing has obtained a success. In chronicling this fact all is said that is really necessary. Criticism is impertinence and mistake. There is no plot to describe; there are no characters to analyse. The hero himself is a cross between the Favourite of Fortune and Sir Simon Simple; the subordinate characters are so many lay figures, with whom Mr. Sothern deals as he pleases. More than once, in the course of a performance which no sense of the exigencies of art could make us dislike or find wearisome, we were reminded of an entertainment that has been seen at the Aquarium and elsewhere, entitled, if our memory serve us rightly, "Lieut. Cole and his Merry Men". Neither Mr. Byron nor Mr. Sothern needs to despise the association, seeing that this

entertainment, which is ventriloquial, abounds in genuine humour, and approaches, if it does not reach, comic creation. Quite glad are we indeed to have this opportunity of speaking incidentally this word of praise for a performance which, except for some purpose of illustration, can scarcely receive notice at our hands. Mr. Byron's characters are, however, like those in the entertainment in question, and they burst into speech or song, indulge in protest or guffaw, at the bidding of Mr. Sothern. He meantime shows himself the most foolish of his sex through three acts to prove himself the wisest in the fourth act. It may be objected that such results as are presented would not spring from the agencies set in motion, that cause stands aloof from effect, and conclusion is dissociated from premiss. This is true. The play is simple, sheer absurdity. It is, however, pervaded with abundance of jokes, good, bad, and indifferent; it enlists the sympathies of those who will allow themselves to be interested, and it piques the sense of drollery of those to whom the incongruous is a vindication of the impossible. Mr. Sothern meanwhile shows himself in the piece at his best, delivers his jokes with a manner so careless, easy, and unconscious it trebles their value, and moves up and down the play a being wholly preposterous and irresistibly comic. The visitor to the Haymarket should, indeed, fall into an old child's game, and open his mouth and shut his eyes, intellectually speaking, to receive what is sent him.

AMONG the results of realism in matters dramatic few Sept. 21, 1878.
are more constantly manifested than the added difficulty
of belief which attends any violation of probability, whether
as regards the motives of the characters or their actions.
It may be accepted as a rule in dramatic art that the first
demand on the faith of an audience meets with the most

ready acceptance. So long as perfect consistency is maintained, an audience will believe whatever it is told to believe. It sees no difficulty in the way of accepting any condition of affairs set before it. Whether the scene of the story be fairyland, the region of burlesque, or the actual world, is wholly unimportant. Caliban and Ariel are as real as Capt. Cuttle and Little Nell ; the love of Ruy Blas for his Queen is as natural and sympathetic as that of Dobbin for Amelia. In proportion, however, as the characters presented approach more nearly those with whom we are familiar, the standard of probability we apply to their actions is more exact. An exercise of imagination is necessary to enter into the feelings of Undine, when she sees transferred to another the love that was hers, and knows that a revenge adequate to the offence is in her power. We can all, however, at a moment's notice, conceive what is likely to be the conduct of one who, living in the world we inhabit, dressed in our own garb, and placed amidst our own surroundings, finds himself the victim of one of those vicissitudes to which we are constantly exposed. From such a person we exact behaviour conformable to a standard of common-sense and worldly experience.

The more closely, then, the dramatist adheres to the actual and the realistic in exterior matters, the more careful should he be not to overpass the boundaries of probability in motive and in action. So far as regards scenery, a green curtain, such as we hear of in Shakespeare's days, was all that a playgoer with imagination required to enable him to realise forest, temple, or market-place in which the action was supposed to pass. The moment scenery was commenced accuracy became imperative. You could not present a cottage as a temple, or a forest as a street. It would lead too far to show how difficulties of this kind were met on the Greek stage, and how, by a system of purely conventional arrangements,

the nature of which was understood by the spectator beforehand, it was known that, when a man arrived by a certain door, he came from the neighbouring city, and not from the adjacent temple or the remote port. A system like this was so far unobjectionable that the difficulty met the playgoer at the outset, and did not front him in the middle of the action. Our own system leads constantly to far graver inconveniences, as when a man falls into what is obviously real water, and comes forward a moment after with dry clothes, or when a soldier, who has borne the brunt of sustained action, appears with his armour fresh, and his accoutrements burnished. Mr. Byron's drama of "Conscience Money" illustrates the kind of difficulty in question. With the skill that comes of long practice Mr. Byron disposes his characters upon the stage so that they look like real beings engaged in a real action. So lifelike are they that we exact from them a behaviour consistent with what is known of human conduct. As we progress and our interest commences to grow we find our faith disturbed. The fact that our sympathy has for a moment gone out to what appear to be real personages makes us resentful when we find them dummies. At the close of "Conscience Money" our feeling towards Frederick Damer, Mr. Byron's hero, is that of one who has apologised to a well-made wax figure for rubbing against it, and has then discovered that the set smile which deceived him could not be dismissed. At the outset of the story Fred Damer loves a girl, and is uncertain whether his attentions are agreeable. He determines to put all doubts to rest, proposes in a manly fashion, and is accepted. While still in the seventh heaven he finds that a compensatory misfortune brings him to earth. So far all is human, natural, sympathetic. He marries the girl without telling her that his fortune rests on an unstable basis, or rather on 'no basis at all. Here, again, though weak and reprehensible, his conduct is human. When,

however, having wronged his wife by his reticence, he attempts to atone for it by neglect amounting to desertion, we fail to see the logic of such a process; and when he accepts as his close friend and the constant associate of his wife a man he knows to have been her lover and believes to be a scoundrel, our surprise is dashed with contempt. Still men are illogical, and something may be allowed the writer who has to frame a story. A return of interest comes again when the hero detects the false friend and tears the mask from his face, and it develops into sympathy when the outbreak brings upon him a revelation of his own miserable secret, of which his enemy has traitorously obtained possession. When, however, after the second exposure we find the hero again accepting in a moment a suggestion of the same transparent villain, to the effect that he shall at once quit his home without bidding farewell to his wife, common-sense rises in mutiny. Such a thing cannot be believed, unless we choose to assume the hero to be absolutely demented. So strong is this feeling, the whole audience experiences it, and a play which has succeeded fairly up to this point drops and becomes a failure. A full lesson on the requirements of the drama is afforded in these things. A study of the fate of this piece should prevent Mr. Byron from ever incurring a similar fate with any succeeding work. It is scarcely worth while in the case of a piece that has collapsed to deal with matters of detail. As a new termination may yet be provided, it is perhaps right to point out that the minor characters, while cleverly sketched, are hurriedly filled in. Sir Archibald Crane, for instance, shows himself pompous in the opening scene, and selfish and mercenary in the concluding. Between times, however, he remains colourless. Much of the dialogue is good, though some is very weak. There is enough, however, of drollery to give the piece a hold upon the public, when another termination is provided.

Mr. Byron plays satisfactorily in his own play a character such as he has frequently presented. Mr. Terriss is excellent as the rather Iago-like villain of the piece, and Mr. Kelly, Mr. Howe, and Mr. and Miss Pateman are seen to more or less advantage. We do not know whether Mr. Byron or Miss Pateman is responsible for the following phrase: "He much prefers her company to that of mine or that of ours". Such a gem of language was, however, set before the public on the first performance.

Most threadbare among subjects of satire is the theme Sept. 28, 1878.
MM. Meilhac and Halévy chose for their comedy of "La Veuve," produced four years ago with indifferent success at the Gymnase. From the earliest days feminine inconstancy has been ridiculed by every scribe who has striven to win reputation as a narrator or a wit. A story corresponding to the famous legend of the matron of Ephesus is said to form a portion of the literary heritage of every civilised race, and some races that are not civilised. The world meanwhile had to wait the arrival of Shakspeare before it heard a statement not less accurate concerning man, that

The fraud of men was ever so,
Since summer first was leafy.

So much of the success of a work depends upon what the mind of the workman brings to it, society has rightly ceased to occupy itself much with questions of originality. If, then, we draw attention to the singularly old-fashioned nature of the satire in "La Veuve," it is with no idea of challenging the wisdom of the authors. The reception, however, accorded in England to "The Idol," which is an almost literal version of the French piece, justifies a doubt whether the subject is, for dramatic purposes, all that could be desired. In the case of satire, as of other

things, the strong application that is forced home by a dramatic representation tells with an effect that may well, in some cases, prove damaging. By common accord governments, from the most despotic to the most advanced, have seen that the expression of political views upon the stage was too dangerous to be permitted. In the wildest throes of Revolutionary France absolute freedom of speech was only accorded to be withdrawn. From the added vivacity of interpretation it comes that the oldest and most conventional satire in the world proved too much for an English audience, and provoked manifestations of discontent.

The story of "The Idol" shows a woman mourning for her husband and refusing to be comforted. Her friends strive to win her back to the world, and an ardent and impassioned lover waits to take advantage of any moment of relenting and supplant an old love with a new. That he succeeds is due less to his own persistency than to the discovery by the wife that her husband, during the last year of his life, had been wasting his substance upon a mistress. This story, ridiculously slight to form the basis of a three-act comedy, is treated in wittiest and most cynical style by the French authors, and is supplied with a comic embroidery that almost succeeds in covering up its threadbare fabric. Each separate scene elicits a laugh, while the whole incurs condemnation. It is absurd to suppose that the question of morality could have anything to do with the verdict passed, seeing that, compared with the pieces that now form the staple of English comedy, "The Idol" is innocence itself. It could not be dulness, for the play was never dull. The grievance consisted in the way in which conventional assumptions were satirised. Heartless derision was lavished on conjugal fidelity, and the direction "bury your dead out of my sight" was counselled with emphasis and haste felt to be indecent. In saying this we are taking the standpoint

of the public, not our own. In our judgment, the piece, though possibly a little unfeeling, is pardonable, and might well pass muster in times like the present. A comedy of Mr. W. S. Gilbert supplies ten times the amount of satire against what is most respectable in our nature. As regards the subject itself, it has, of course, a serious as well as a comic side. There are few who, feeling the sense of loss departing from them, and the enjoyment of life reasserting its empire, have not felt inclined to cry—

Let Love clasp Grief, lest both be drowned.

It is yet known that were it not, as Mr. Swinburne complains, that—

We are not sure of sorrow,

life would grow impossible, and the races of men would subside. Still grief over losses by death and discontent with its want of endurance have no such special sanctity as should put them outside the province of the humorist.

The piece, we have said, met with an unfavourable reception. We cannot, nevertheless, resist the belief that with some slight modification of the dialogue it will become a success. It is adequately acted, one character, that of the heroine, being presented with something more than intelligence by Miss Eastlake. Mr. H. Paulton, in a small part, displayed some genuine comedy acting, which contrasted pleasantly with the exaggeration into which he has sometimes been betrayed. Mr. Brough and Mr. Bishop gave distinct physiognomies to two eccentric characters.

In announcing as "new and original" a piece which in the same breath he declares to be adapted from the French, Mr. Wyndham goes a step beyond Mr. Tom Taylor, who would assign to a production of this class the first adjective only. It is difficult to conjecture what meaning will be left to words when "original" and "adapted" are allowed to be applied in the same sentence to the same work.

Oct. 5, 1878.

THE evils long anticipated by those who watch with intelligent interest the progress of our stage are upon us, and it seems no longer possible to present a Shakspearian play at Drury Lane without moving an audience to open derision. Year by year the number of actors capable of speaking six consecutive lines of Shakspeare diminishes, and whatever traditions concerning poetic art still linger among actors are the property of those whom managers are beginning to regard as superannuated. Mr. Phelps, on whom, as the last representative of a school of acting the age is ceasing to understand, the waves of criticism have beaten most fiercely, remains erect, but is rarely seen. Mrs. Dallas-Glyn, in whom is summed all that is best in the art we once considered national, stands, or is held, aloof, though we might fairly expect to see her when a play like "The Winter's Tale" is put forward. Mrs. Hermann Vezin, one of the few actresses that can give adequate utterance to the music of Shakspeare's lines, is relegated to secondary *rôles*, which her genius elevates into primary importance. The principal parts in a Shakspearian revival are assigned to those who, so far as Shakspeare is concerned, may be pronounced, in the words of Jaques's celebrated description—

sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

There is no longer any pretence about the matter. A Shakspearian play is a vehicle for scenery and decoration, and nothing else. A score of years ago, even though the cry of decadence was continually heard, we had at Sadler's Wells performances which, so far as regards some parts at least, had beauty of suggestion, if not of illustration, and at the Princess's we had a faithful, if conventional, reflection of that which previous ages had held concerning the manner in which Shakspeare was to be rendered, encumbered, it might be, with spectacle, but not wholly buried beneath it. Now the *mise en scène* is everything, and the acting, except in one or two parts, is not to

be found. It is useless to chide individuals for the absence of gifts which they could only have obtained by processes altogether outside what is regarded as the function of the actor—by the study, that is, of the language they may have to speak until a sense of its beauty and worth breaks upon them. It is the system that is in fault rather than the individual, whose crime is that of omission only. Still it is a lamentable thing to see a performance of "The Winter's Tale" in which the Hermione displays no poetry, the Leontes no passion, and the Autolycus no fun. Such was, however, the Lenten fare provided the visitor to Drury Lane on Saturday last. By the manner in which she played *Paulina* Mrs. Vezin redeemed the entire performance from intellectual sterility. The effect of her acting, and especially of her delivery, was, so to speak, to change the centre of the action and make the play revolve lopsidedly round the character she performed. Like a dispossessed monarch she held apart a court to which all that was noble flocked, until the splendour of the nominal court was outshone. Mr. Ryder, too, as *Antigonus*, showed what a knowledge of his business and a full amount of training can do for a man who always seems to discharge perfunctorily the task allotted him. In one or two minor characters there was a respectable amount of intention. It was, however, in the principal *rôles* the shortcoming was most conspicuous. The public meanwhile applauded frequently and derided at times. It is a fact worth chronicling that a line of Shakespeare provoked a distinct outburst of discontent. It was that in which Leontes bids Antigonus take the female offspring of his queen, "And see it instantly consumed with fire". Such a counsel is of course a little shocking to those who are not completely *au fait* with all that follows and precedes. It is accordingly difficult to lay on an actor the blame of the result. Still, if the audience had entered into the heart of Leontes as we conceive it doing

with Kean playing the character, there would not have been time to deal with an extravagance of speech. It is only an uninterested audience that could stop to be thus critical.

Except the performance of Paulina by Mrs. Vezin, there is nothing in the representation on which we need to dwell. The scenery had the marvellous touch Mr. Beverley never fails to impart. In the management of the play, and in the dances, etc., introduced, the arrangements of Charles Kean are closely followed. He it was who first introduced the Pyrrhic dance, as it is called, which prefaces the action in the first scene, and he is responsible for the substitution of what claims to be a species of Dionysiac revels in place of the dance by the "three carters, three shepherds, three neat-herds, three swine-herds, that have made themselves all men of hair," which Shakspeare introduces. Without having any claim to the rank it assumes, the dance of the satyrs gives a fair idea of the—

Riot and ill-manag'd merriment
Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe
Stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds
When for their teeming flocks and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan
And thank the Gods amiss.

It may not, of course, be assumed that this representation is the best our stage can supply. By collecting from different houses our best actors we might get a representation of "The Winter's Tale" which, though it might not satisfy the critic, could not fail greatly to interest him. It is much to be feared, however, that the cast of "The Winter's Tale" is as strong as any Shakspearian play is likely to receive, and this means that until a new state of affairs is brought about, interest in such representations is at an end. Still it must be remembered that there is no performance of a play of Shakspeare from which a student may not learn something. Shakspeare wrote for the

stage, and it is difficult to judge of the full significance of his work until it is seen in the perspective with a view to which it was done. Those who recall Mrs. Siddons in the statue scene of Hermione—they are now very few—can still tell how marvellously effective is a scene the full merit of which can never be guessed from the mere perusal of the play. A fine impression dwells with those whose memories go no farther back than Mrs. Charles Kean and Mrs. Warner. It is, however, a pity that no actress is willing to follow out quite the indications of Shakspeare with regard to Hermione. It would, perhaps, be too much to ask of any woman to remember that Leontes expressly says of the statue:—

Her natural posture!

* * * * *

But yet, Paulina,

Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing
So aged as this seems.

That, too, is but a clumsy arrangement of the play which, as in the present instance, brings on Time to deliver his soliloquy in the middle of an act.

THE attempt to establish at the Aquarium Theatre a Nov. 9, 1878. series of performances of old comedy resolves itself into an effort to *exploiter* Mr. William Farren. Against this, under existing conditions of art, there is nothing to be urged. Mr. Farren is a conscientious and a competent actor, wanting little that experience and nothing that diligence can supply. We have now, since the death of Mr. Phelps, not more than one man as capable of giving effect to an equal number of comedies concerning which traditions and memories still survive. It is pleasant to witness then an experiment such as is commenced at the Aquarium, even though the conditions may not be the most propitious. Weak as is, on the whole, the company by which the principal actor is supported, it can, it must

be remembered, be strengthened at any moment, since for morning performances the entire *personnel* of every London theatre is practically available.

Mr. Farren being, then, the "head and front" of the undertaking, it is necessary to ascertain what are his qualifications for the *rôle* he assumes. Like many, it may almost be said most, of those artists concerning whom the public is most interested, Mr. Farren has passed through every phase of condemnation or indifference, to find appreciation slowly settle upon and around him. When first as W. Farren, jun., or, indeed, earlier still, under the stage name of Forrester, behind which his modesty at the outset concealed itself, he claimed the suffrages of the public, no great indulgence was accorded him. During many years he was spoken of by his friends as a hard, and his enemies as a wooden, actor. It was only when middle age had been reached, and the character of the *jeune premier* had been abandoned, he began to establish himself in general favour. Since that time he has advanced to the front in public esteem. Some encouragement in the prosecution of an arduous career must have been afforded him by the fact, for which necessarily we are indebted to hearsay, that his career is identical with that of his father, whose *répertoire* he has of late commenced to play.

It is characteristic of the best vintages that they are the longest in maturing. Judged by this standard, Mr. Farren must be an exceedingly fine wine, since now, after a quarter of a century's incessant practice, he is still far from ripe. His method is formed, and he shows a knowledge of the springs of pathos. Still, the entire command of them is not yet his, and his art must still be pronounced crude. It is much to be feared that it will be the same with him as we have known it with other artists, and that the finishing grace to his style will only be given by infirmity.

Mr. Farren's *Grandfather Whitehead* is an excellent

performance. It is only when we compare it with the very best efforts in the same direction that we detect its shortcomings. The character has only on three nights been seen in London since the death of the elder Farren, and it is necessary accordingly to say that Grandfather Whitehead is a cheery old man, who dwells in the house of his son, and believes things in general to be as prosperous as he in the exercise of a thoroughly benign disposition would have them. Assuming, not altogether unnaturally, that some money he finds "lying about" is his own, he spends it in toys for his grandchild--on whom he dotes--and in other like trifles. In so doing he accomplishes the ruin of his son-in-law. Ultimately he is able to make amends for the evil he has wrought. In the display of cheerfulness and content succeeded by suffering and defeat is the opportunity an actor seeks. This part is of all others the most closely associated with Mr. Farren's father. Of the manner in which the elder Farren acted the younger preserves a faithful copy, and those who see the bowed figure and the drooping venerable head might almost believe that the elder Farren still survived. There is, however, something wanting. The resemblance is that of photography, the accuracy of which from one standpoint is as unquestionable as from another it is meaningless. What is not there is the divine touch that makes pathos harrowing. Pathetic Mr. Farren's interpretation is. It has not, however, the gift we can recall in performances such as those of Mr. Alfred Wigan in the "First Night," of M. Regnier in "La Joie fait Peur," or of Mr. Boucicault in "Night and Morning," his own version of the piece last named. It does not necessarily follow that Mr. Farren is an inferior artist to the actors mentioned, since wideness of range is an indispensable factor in the sum of artistic claim. Still, in the matter of pathos he comes behind them, and pathos is the point in which his father's reputation stood highest. The method of the elder Farren,

which the son transmits, is said to have been that of Bouffé, the French comedian. "Grandfather Whitehead" is an adaptation by Mark Lemon of some piece of the Scribe school, the identity of which we are unable to fix.

IN "The Liar" Mr. Farren played a part so distinct from Grandfather Whitehead as to bear testimony to the versatility of an actor who could in the same morning assume characters so different. His performance is able but ponderous, and has this effect—that the levity of disposition, to use no stronger word, which characterises the younger Wilding, seems altogether unpardonable in the case of a man of so staid demeanour and respectable carriage. The version is that in two acts in which Mr. Charles Mathews appeared at the Olympic and elsewhere. Concerning Mr. Farren's surroundings few words need be said. Miss Litton, always bright and attractive in comedy, gave with much spirit and appreciation the part of *Miss Grantham*; Mr. Collette, who appeared in both pieces, acted with animal spirits that once or twice bordered on the obstreperous, but contributed to the success of the whole. Mr. Norman Forbes looked well under powder, and acted agreeably. In the first piece Mr. Fawn, in a ridiculous costume, acted in a manner for which the only palliation is that it has long been supposed to be characteristic of low comedy. If we cannot get rid of such dress as the padded haunches and the short lappets of the coat at any less price, it is to be hoped we shall throw low comedy over altogether. A piece such as "Grandfather Whitehead" is murdered by the introduction of those devices without which our comedians dare not pretend to be funny.

Jan. 4, 1879. How firm a faith in Mr. Irving inspires a large section of the public was testified on Monday night, when that actor made his first appearance in a theatre under his own

management. The occasion is not to be forgotten by those who were present. In a house which may now claim to be one of the handsomest in London, and in presence of a thoroughly representative audience, Mr. Irving received such manifestations of delight and approval as recall the most brilliant triumphs of the tragedians of past time. It is impossible to doubt the sincerity of the convictions that found expression in ringing cheers and shouts of affectionate welcome. No amount of care or expense could have organised a demonstration of the kind ; nothing short of spontaneous and overmastering enthusiasm could have produced it. The most severely critical estimate of Mr. Irving's powers does not involve any scepticism as to the value of a demonstration like this. While successive governments, with a timidity and mistrust of the people which speak little for their intelligence, leave all questions of literature and art to look after themselves, the public recognises a debt of gratitude to those who endeavour by private action to make up for national shortcoming. To present a Shakspearian masterpiece under favourable conditions, with an adequate cast and artistic surroundings, is a work of no small difficulty or importance. In saying, as he did in a short address to the public after the performance, that the dream of his life had been to do this, Mr. Irving obtained implicit credence. It has, indeed, required years of preparation to bring about the result. As some motive of personal ambition is sure to colour most private effort, it was necessary for the actor to win acceptance for his own conception of Hamlet or some other leading Shakspearian character. This in itself means delaying an experiment until the top of an arduous profession is reached. A theatre has then to be obtained, and actors, seldom too amenable to discipline, have to be drilled until they become parts of one harmonious whole. This triumph Mr. Irving has obtained. The representation of "Hamlet" supplied on Monday night is

the best the stage during the last quarter of a century has seen, and it is the best also that is likely under existing conditions to be seen for some time to come. Scenic accessories are explanatory without being cumbersome, the costumes are picturesque and striking and show no needless affectation of archæological accuracy, and the interpretation has an *ensemble* rarely found in any performance, and never during recent years in a representation of tragedy. Here is much for which to be grateful. The points raised call for a few further words. As regards scenery, successful attempt is made to add to the impressiveness and intelligibility of the action. The "more remote part of the platform," to which the Ghost draws Hamlet, presents that "dreadful summit of the cliff" which Horatio shrinkingly describes. Very impressive is the effect of the ghostly figure, erect, with a background of sea, and with an unearthly light falling upon his helmet. The play scene is well arranged, though there is nothing in it calling for special notice; the scene of Ophelia's interment gives an imposing representation of Catholic ceremonial, and furnishes Hamlet and Horatio with satisfactory means of escaping observation. Perhaps, however, the best arrangement of all is that in the closing scene, in which the King's death is brought about. This, if not perfect, is a great improvement on anything previously seen. To avoid the extreme improbability of a man standing, like Claudius, to hear himself defied and outraged, and to wait for his death-blow, the King should be so absorbed in the death of the Queen as to be scarcely conscious of the surrounding circumstances; and the accusation of Laertes, made with failing breath, should only reach him when the final words are uttered: "The King knows all". In the present case the action becomes, however, intelligible on the exercise of slight powers of imagination on the part of the audience.

It is, of course, an anomaly to show early Danish

soldiers wearing chain armour. All, however, that is necessary in the case of a play like this is to give a species of picturesque antiquity to the attire. Shakspeare has, as Mr. Marshall says in his preface to the acting version now employed, been hampered by "no formal respect for geographical or historical accuracy," and has introduced, in a period which is almost fabulous, references to "partisans," "cannons," "rapiers," and "hangers". One or two things may, indeed, be mentioned at which no stickler for accuracy has ever arrived. When the players came on the stage the player queen should, in fact, be a boy. Up to Shakspeare's time women had taken no part in dramatic representation, and Hamlet, when he says: "What, my young lady and mistress! By'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine," may be supposed to indicate that he recognises the player of women under his female disguise. A second alteration that regard for historical accuracy would suggest is that, according to early custom, the play before the King should be presented in the afternoon by daylight. Plays were thus given in early days, and in the century in which the action is supposed to pass the means of lighting would not be adequate to an evening entertainment of the class. Hamlet, shortly afterwards, says: "'Tis now the very witching time of night". This, however, does not, as might easily be shown, disprove our assertion. These suggestions are not intended for acceptance. They aim only at showing how hopeless a matter is the struggle after absolute accuracy.

Of Mr. Irving's Hamlet we have already spoken. It is not greatly changed. The outline is distinctly the same as before, though much pains have been bestowed on the filling up. We do not accept as new readings the delivery while sitting of speeches formerly spoken standing, or other like alterations in arrangement. Nor do we feel that changes of method as regards matters of detail call

for special comment. The one vital alteration of conception appears to consist in presenting Hamlet as under the influence of an overmastering love for Ophelia. A knowledge of his own weakness seems to inspire him when, subsequently addressing Horatio, he says:—

Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart.

The chief grace in the new representation consisted in the delivery of the speeches to Ophelia in the third act. In this the mocking tone did not for a moment hide the profound emotion under which Hamlet laboured, and the hands which repulsed her petitioning hands trembled with passionate longing. That this view of Hamlet is correct will scarcely be disputed. That he loved Ophelia he declares over her grave; that he felt it his duty, under the influences of a task such as that enjoined him, to erase from the table of his memory all "trivial fond records," he also states. The indications of the pain it costs a nature such as this, quick in resolution and shrinking and incapable in action, to inflict on the woman he loves the grief it is yet necessary she should sustain, are well conceived. That they were effective in action was ascribable to a great extent to the admirable acting of Miss Terry. Picturesque, tender, and womanly throughout, Miss Terry on one or two occasions gave an inspired rendering of Ophelia. The support she afforded Mr. Irving was of the utmost importance, and the scene before the play has probably never been so well rendered. An attempt to dignify the character of Polonius, to which most are prompted who see how wise midst his sententiousness he appears in the early scenes, is made in the interest of Mr. Chippendale, who plays the character. In order to bear out this portions of the speech to Claudius and Gertrude, which elicit from the latter the rebuke: "More matter, with less art," are omitted. Mr. Forrester's *King* and Miss Pauncefort's

Queen are worthy of notice, as is also the *Ghost* of Mr. T. Mead.

It is impossible to regard this performance with disfavour, and it would be ungracious, as well as tedious, to expatiate upon defects. As regards interpretation, it is possible to point out many passages in which a different reading might with advantage be adopted. The most noteworthy defect on the part of the principal actor consists in a tendency to deprive vowels of their value, and pronounce, for instance, ghost as though it rhymed to lost instead of host.

NEVER, perhaps, in the history of letters has an ^{Mar. 29, 1879.} experiment been tried bolder or more startling than that of Mr. Gilbert in the production of "Gretchen". When Dryden and Davenant and their successors undertook to remove the crude work of Shakspeare to suit their own more cultivated tastes, there was nothing especially courageous in the action. The fame of Shakspeare did not then stand on the pinnacle in the sight of all men it has subsequently occupied. From its first appearance, however, the "Faust" of Goethe took intellectual Europe by storm. So sensible is Mr. Gilbert of the worth of the work with which he deals, he justifies his own effort on the one ground that the play he alters is not suited to dramatic exposition, and he fortifies his opinion on this point by quoting the assertion of Schlegel, in his lecture on "German Drama," that "Faust" "runs out in all directions beyond the limits of the theatre". It is a poor theory of art and a curb upon subsequent work to forbid a man treating a subject which another has developed with results however satisfactory. If a coming dramatist has for us in his quiver another "Orestead," a new "Hamlet," or a new "Macbeth," we will accept it gladly, and will not indulge too much in comparisons. Mr. Gilbert

has, however, departed so widely from the story of Goethe he might with advantage have quitted it altogether. The legend of Faustus is common property. It has been treated at more or less length by Marlowe, Lessing, and Goethe, by Mr. Bailey and the Member for Stoke. It has been chosen by Coleridge for dramatic treatment; has been modernised, rearranged, set to music, burlesqued—subjected, in fact, to every form of dignity and indignity. If Mr. Gilbert then had left Goethe entirely out of the question, he would have challenged less dangerous comparisons, and allowed himself fuller scope. So little of Goethe is there in what remains it would have been better in all respects to leave that great name unmentioned. One scene—that between Martha and Mephistopheles—is but slightly altered from "*Faust*". In the rest of the play the language is entirely Mr. Gilbert's, though the incidents run parallel with some of those in Goethe. Five-sixths of the characters of that which we must call the original disappear. Among those thus disposed of Valentine alone belongs to the central action. His disappearance removes necessarily what is most tragic in the story. What remains is indeed so void of tragic depth, there is scarcely occasion to link it with the life of Faust. A priest may well grow weary of his vows, escape from them, and woo a maiden who, on finding out his true character, quits resolutely his embraces and dies of mingled shame, penitence, and sorrow, without demanding the interference of any supernatural power and without recalling very strongly any past treatment of "*Faust*". This is practically the whole of Mr. Gilbert's play. While, then, taken as independent work, "*Gretchen*" is entitled to rank as a powerful satire and a poetical and emotional play, it arouses, when considered as a version of "*Faust*," a sense of shortcoming that cannot be suppressed, and that no cheers of a delighted audience will drive from the memory. *Faust* in Goethe is not a very powerfully conceived

character. While refusing to accept in full the verdict of Coleridge that he is dull and meaningless, we cannot accept Goethe's own self-laudation concerning it when he says: "It would have been a fine thing, indeed, if I had strung so rich, varied, and highly diversified a life as that I have brought to view in *Faust* upon the slender string of one pervading idea". Still, *Faust* is a man in whose longings the emotional and the intellectual are so blended that no gratification can probably satisfy him, and certainly not the intellectual life he leads previous to his rejuvenescence. *Faustus* in Marlowe meantime has a burning and almost Satanic desire to know and to rule, and his appetite for the unseen and the unattainable is impressive and grand in its extravagance. Mr. Gilbert, however, has lowered the character almost to the level of modern life. There is in his play no psychology whatever. A priest wearied of his vows and pining to renew the joys he has too hastily forsworn, a maiden young, loving, tender, and innocent, and a rather conventional soldier, carry on the main action, and the devil pipes to the audience in some lines of strong and frequently happy satire. There are dramatic situations in the play, and much of the dialogue has a charm which is quite Mr. Gilbert's own. We do not, however, while admitting all that is poetical in conception and excellent in satire, know why *Gretchen* should not be a Breton maiden, and *Faust* *Père Hyacinthe*, or, for the matter of that, *Martin Luther*. For *Mephisto*, though we should be sorry to miss some of his speeches, there is no need whatever. It is easy to cut out of Goethe's "*Faust*" much that is apparently extraneous to the central story. Goethe himself knew, however, that in what is apparently extraneous lies much that is really vital. He would not have written "*Faust*" to depict the loves of the hero and heroine. When *Gretchen*'s shame is but indicated, when no crime beyond that of loving too well burdens the conscience of the maiden,

and when the *dénouement* is reached in saving from the menacing sword of Gottfried, his rival, the life of her lover, there is surely nothing to link the modern play with the great dramatic legend which has been to Northern Europe what the story of "Don Juan" has been to the more fervid imaginations of the South. It is difficult, then, to say of Mr. Gilbert's play all that from the literary standpoint it deserves, inasmuch as it is not what it claims to be.

Little in the acting calls for comment. Mr. Archer's *Mephisto* surprised those who had seen in his previous assumptions nothing to promise a performance of the kind. It can scarcely be the fault of the actor that the evil one has to fall down in a dead faint; the result of his indignation at the untrustworthiness of his latest pupil. Mediæval chroniclers have depicted the devil baffled and astonished, but did not dream of exhibiting him as fainting. The modern author of the "Legend of St. Medard" has, it is true, shown the arch-fiend weary and faint and even footsore: it has been reserved for times absolutely modern to show him in a swoon. Miss Marion Terry's gentle and maidenly style and her quiet earnestness were of use as *Gretchen*, and Mr. Conway's bearing was scarcely less advantageous to *Faust*. It cannot be said, however, that either the *Faust* or the *Gretchen*, or, indeed, any character of the play, except *Mephisto*, was realised.

CHAPTER XIII.

Vaudeville: “*The Girls*,” comedy in three acts, by H. J. Byron.—Court: “*The Queen’s Shilling*,” comedy in three acts, by G. W. Godfrey.—Gaiety: Representations of the Comédie Française, “*Le Misanthrope*,” “*Les Précieuses Ridicules*,” “*Hernani*,” “*Le Marquis de Villemer*,” “*Le Menteur*,” “*Mdlle. de Belle Isle*,” “*Phèdre*,” “*Zaire*,” “*Le Sphinx*,” “*Le Gendre de M. Poirier*,” “*L’Ami Fritz*,” “*Les Caprices de Marianne*,” “*On ne Badine pas avec l’Amour*,” “*Le Jeu de l’Amour et du Hasard*,” “*Mdlle. de la Seiglière*,” “*Les Fourchambault*,” “*Le Mariage de Figaro*,” “*L’Avare*,” “*Andromaque*,” “*Ruy Blas*,” “*Mercadet le Faiseur*,” “*Le Mariage de Victorine*,” “*Les Fourberies de Scapin*,” etc.—Princess’s: “*Drink*,” a drama in five acts, from the French of M. Zola, by Charles Reade.

THE work with which it is sought to replace “Our April 26, 1879. Boys” at the Vaudeville Theatre resembles in some respects its predecessor. Like it the new play has a story of purely domestic interest, and puts in fairly effective contrast vulgarity and culture; like it, too, “The Girls” appeals to a class of emotions which are the possession of most playgoers, and are at once the most responsive and the easiest to reach. It is, however, in all respects except one, an inferior work. The characters in “The Girls” are through two acts as distinct and painted with as much sincerity as those in “Our Boys”. That their actions interest us less is attributable to defects in the plot. Mr. Byron’s comedies give us the feeling that he starts with a purpose and throws it overboard when he

is well on his way. In "The Girls" he appears to have proposed to himself to show the relative advantages of marriages contracted for love and for money. He presents us accordingly to two heroines who have a *quasi-sisterly* relation, and who marry respectively a poor sculptor and a wealthy *parvenu*. One act is spent in showing the characters of the suitors and a second in bringing them, after marriage, to loggerheads. Having reached this point Mr. Byron dismisses his purpose as easily as a practised writer drops a metaphor that has served its end, and finishes his play in a fashion that is at once commonplace and improbable. To a desire to render his characters sympathetic he sacrifices their consistency. What is clumsier still in art, he strives, by means of dialogue, to show them other than they are. An instance absolutely crucial of a kind of defect which is only to be expected in juvenile work is afforded in a character called Plantagenet G. Potter. In all his actions this individual proves himself a vulgar, illiterate, pretentious hound, without a redeeming feature. Insolent in his prosperity, he is in his defeat cowardly and abject, and he treats with absolute brutality the wife who has sunk herself low enough to share his fate. Inasmuch, however, as this character has to be played by Mr. James, who presents it with artistic truth and sincerity, it is sought to give it some claim on sympathy. This is done by the simple process of making the characters say of Potter that he is not so bad as he seems, he has a good heart, and the like. An artist who, being his brother-in-law, is turned in the most offensive manner conceivable from his house, yet finds at the moment of humiliation some redeeming trait in him, and a peer, who must regard him with ineffable contempt, declares that he sees something in him. This is not the way to write drama. It would scarcely, indeed, be accepted in the mildest kind of prose fiction. Mr. Byron will never do himself justice until he pays less heed

to his exponents and more heed to the requirements of the art he follows. A play is a microcosm, and the characters introduced in it should be bound by its laws. There is no room except in farce for inconsistency, and the actions of each character should be as much links in a chain as are those of a human being in real life. The best dramatic work is done when man is shown, as in the Greek drama, the slave of circumstance, or, as in the romantic drama, at war with it. Man the shuttlecock of an author can interest none. It may be mentioned incidentally that Mr. Byron deprives himself of a familiar and trustworthy staff of the dramatist by closing his love interest at the end of the first act. In spite of some admirably powerful acting by Mr. James in the repulsive part to which reference has been made, and the careful and successful performances of Mr. Thorne, Mr. Farren, and Miss Bishop, and in spite also of the *prestige* of the house, "The Girls" barely escaped shipwreck on its opening voyage. If it is to run long very important alterations must be made in the last act.

IT is a curious circumstance that a *vaudeville* so slight as "Un Fils de Famille" of Bayard should have appeared in three separate versions on the English stage. "The Queen's Shilling" is, however, the third adaptation, the two previous renderings being "The Lancers; or, the Gentleman's Son," given in 1853 at the Princess's by Charles Kean, and "The Discarded Son," translated and produced at the Adelphi in the same year by Mr. B. Webster. Eighteen years later the French play was given at the St. James's by M. Lafontaine, who took in it his original part of the Colonel. That a comedy like this, by a pupil and collaborator of Scribe, should be chosen for a morning performance at a house in which "Bataille de Dames" constitutes the evening entertainment, and should win favourable acceptance, is a

significant fact. It might at first be supposed that the kind of taste that is shown in the mounting of pieces was extending to the choice of them, and that we were going to adopt the plays of our grandfathers as well as their furniture. A more exact explanation is, however, supplied by the manner in which pieces are acted at the Court Theatre. It is not too much to say that a whole range of drama which has obtained a very moderate amount of popularity in England is open to a management like that of the Court. Until recently a *vaudeville* was, so to speak, pitch-forked on to the English stage. A play like the present would then have had for its comic character a low comedian with padded breeches and a reddened nose, while the sister of the Colonel would have been a corresponding "monster" of an opposite sex, the Sycorax to this familiar Caliban. A new system is now introduced. The interpreters of a play like this may not be great actors, they are at least actors who do not greatly overstep the modesty of nature. The utmost care is taken with every detail, and the result is a performance which is a reflection of real life. Mr. Hare does not suggest M. Lafontaine in playing the Colonel. He is marvellously got up, however, and acts with extreme care and finish of style. Mrs. Kendal is not a Rose Chéri, and Mr. Kendal is still further from being a M. Bressant. Both actors, however, realise well the characters they play, though Mrs. Kendal can scarcely be said to keep herself quite within the limits of the society in which the scene is laid. In some of the minor characters the acting is perfect, and the entire performance may be seen with interest and pleasure. It does not stir, for there is no strong dramatic fibre in the play, but it pleases. The decorations are in admirable taste.

June 7, 1879. A CURIOUS change of feeling, attributable doubtless to increased knowledge on the part of the public, is mani-

fested by the reception awarded the Comédie Française on its second visit to England. When, in the evil day of Paris, the more prominent members of the company gave a series of performances in London, in which, owing to the paucity of their numbers, actors of highest mark sustained all *rôles* down to the most subordinate, a mere fraction of the public assembled to witness performances absolutely unequalled. It was not, indeed, until a movement for a complimentary banquet, the inception and execution of which belong to the *Athenæum*, had been set on foot that the playgoing world understood the opportunities of artistic enjoyment and education placed within its reach. Since the period of scarcely controllable excitement begotten of that movement most important facts connected with the Comédie Française have been dealt with in the English press, until the nature, construction, and value of the corporation are now understood as clearly as those of any alien institution are ever understood in England. As a consequence fashion has taken the Comédie Française under its wing, and the eagerness and enthusiasm which are manifested are in excess of the occasion and have a false ring. Not a place was obtainable for the opening night, the entrance of those duly provided with seats was impeded by the exit of disappointed applicants, and those whose interest in art is most keen found themselves thrust into positions in which it was all but impossible for them to frame an accurate judgment.

The opening performance consisted of two pieces of Molière and an act from Racine. A prologue by M. Jean Aicard, entitled "Molière à Shakspeare," was, however, first recited by M. Got, in presence of the entire company. This is a little rhetorical, as such addresses ordinarily are, and has less epigram than we are accustomed to find. It is, however, ingenious and well written, and was finely delivered.

Though the masterpiece of the comedy of Molière, the

one play in which the dramatist puts into burning words his sense of his own wrongs and his weariness under the share allotted him of the burden of humanity—his “Hamlet,” in fact—“Le Misanthrope” is a difficult play wherewith to please an English audience. Without either action or situation, it seeks to interest by purely psychological processes, and exposes to vulgar gaze a nature which vulgar perceptions can never penetrate. It is painful accordingly, if edifying, to watch the efforts to force into drollery the biting phrases of Alceste, of a public which, hearing of Molière as a comic writer, waits for comic scenes. Still, thanks to the brilliant and tasteful dresses, which make the whole a faithful reproduction of seventeenth century life, and to the exquisite delivery of the verse—and thanks also to the careful elaboration of character by actors such as MM. Delaunay and Coquelin and Madame Favart—the whole, if a little long, was pleasant to contemplate. M. Delaunay imparts to Alceste more fierceness and disdain than we are accustomed to associate with the character, and less feeling of defeat and sorrow. The title chosen by Molière justifies, and indeed may seem to necessitate, this view. It is possible, however, to conceive of Alceste as one who is like the poet

Powered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
The love of love.

His cynicism is but skin-deep, and that the mood which counsels his retreat into obscurity is ultimately to be changed seems apparent from the concluding lines of the play, addressed by Philinte, his one friend, to Eliante, whom, in a fashion not quite easy to reconcile with his passion for Célimène, Alceste regards as her possible successor:—

Allons, madame, allons employer toute chose,
Pour rompre le dessein que son cœur se propose.

No such aspect is indicated by M. Delaunay, though it was suggested by his predecessor, M. Bressant. M.

Coquelin was excellent as *Oronte*, and was the very marquis Molière loved to draw—the combination of aristocratic and ridiculous qualities at whom it was easy and unsafe to laugh. Madame Favart gave with purest diction and with admirable acerbity the speeches of *Arsinoé*, and Mdlle. Broisat was natural and agreeable as *Eliante*. MM. Prudhon, Baillet, and Boucher presented with a fidelity worthy of the predecessor and namesake of the artist last named the young butterflies of the court—men whose duties did not extend beyond attending the *petit lever* of their monarch. Mdlle. Croizette alone, whose style leans towards the realistic, seemed scarcely suited to the part she played.

The second act of “*Phèdre*” is that in which, with writhings and convulsions of shame and passion, *Phèdre* owns to Hippolyte her fierce and incestuous love. No better part could be found for showing the intensity of which Mdlle. Sarah Bernhardt is possessor. Such experiments can seldom be satisfactory, since an artist ought, in fact, to rise by the slow and requisite gradations of the drama to the point at which her passion is evinced. In the present case no difficulty of the kind was encountered. From the moment she entered on the stage, carefully guarded and supported by Cénone, Mdlle. Bernhardt realised fully the passionate, febrile, and tortured woman. Her supple frame writhed beneath the influence of mental agony and restless desire, and her postures seemed chosen with admirable art for the purpose of blending the greatest possible amount of seduction with the utmost possible parade of penitence. This is, of course, the true reading, and the whole shame of *Phèdre* is due to her ill success. The key-note to her character is struck in a later act, the third, wherein she says:—

Il n'est plus temps : il sait mes ardeurs insensées,
De l'austère pudeur les bornes sont passées.

J'ai déclaré ma honte aux yeux de mon vainqueur,
Et l'espoir malgré moi s'est glissé dans mon cœur.

While, accordingly, she exhausts herself in invective against herself for her crime, she is, in fact, in the very whirlwind of her passion studying, like a second Delilah,

His virtue or weakness which way to assail.

Obvious as is this view, it is not always presented, the cause of absence being, perhaps, the weakness of the actress. In the present case it was fully revealed, and the picture of abject and lascivious appeal was terrible in its intensity. The performance proves that Mdlle. Bernhardt deserves her high reputation. M. Mounet-Sully was excellent, his acting being wholly free from the extravagance with which it is sometimes charged. Full advantage was taken of the one or two opportunities for the display of power which the act affords.

“LES PRÉCIEUSES RIDICULES,” which concluded the first day’s entertainment, was noteworthy for the admirable comic acting of the brothers Coquelin as *Mascarille* and *Jodellet*, the two lackeys disguised as noblemen. These scenes could not be better presented. Mdlle. Samary and Mdlle. Dinah-Felix were the two *Précieuses*, and M. Thiron was *Gorgibus*.

In the second and third days’ entertainment the classic *répertoire* yielded to the modern, both plays being by the chosen victim of the English censure, M. Dumas *filis*. “L’Etrangère” is familiar to the London playgoer by a version given at the Haymarket. Those who remember the play only by this performance will have but a faint idea of its merits. With these there is little occasion at present to deal. As regards the interpretation, the rendering of the principal characters deserves all that has been said of it in Paris. Mdlle. Bernhardt is indescribable as *Mrs. Clarkson*, the *Marquise* of Madame Madeleine Brohan is unsurpassable, and M. Febvre’s *Clarkson* is a

wonderful conquest over difficulties. Too high praise can scarcely be bestowed on the *Duke* of M. Coquelin, the *Mauriceau* of M. Thiron, and the *Rémonin* of M. Garraud. As a presentation of modern life, indeed, the whole is faultless.

“LE FILS NATUREL” was the means of introducing to the public M. Worms, who acted carefully and well, but scarcely rose to the level of his high reputation. Madame Jouassain, an admirable actress in the *rôles* of dowagers and old women in general, also made a first appearance. This argumentative but brilliant comedy of M. Dumas attracted a less numerous audience, but pleased more than might have been expected. If portions of its dialogue are long, the major portion is incisive, and the whole is telling and fairly sympathetic. Three characters taken respectively by MM. Coquelin, Febvre, and Thiron—the *Notaire*, the father of the *fils naturel*, and the *Marquis*—were played to perfection. There was indeed no shortcoming, unless the hoarseness of Mdlle. Barretta in an *ingénue* part could be counted as such.

M. EMILE ZOLA’S “L’Assommoir” may be said to represent a crisis in the long struggle between Idealists and Naturalists. Great, therefore, was the excitement produced in Paris when a dramatic version of the novel was announced, a presentation of its most daring and salient features under “the fierce light that beats upon a *stage*” being confidently expected. It can hardly be said, however, that this expectation was fulfilled in the work given at the Ambigu. The protracted fight between the rival washerwomen was reduced to the discharge of one or two pailfuls of water by each combatant, and to a single encounter with the *battoirs*, the more gross details of the engagement being necessarily suppressed. The disgusting effects of intoxication, though presented even too

vividly, were curtailed and softened, and much besides that produced revulsion in the reader was most properly withheld from the spectator. "Drink," the version of "L'Assommoir," by Mr. Charles Reade, produced on Monday, avoids still more completely the scenes that were most objected to in the book; so that neither in Paris nor in London has the question been clearly raised in a dramatic shape whether the facts of real life carry with them an inherent right to reproduction in art. Of "Drink" it may be said that it contains no scene that has not its fair vindication in the motives of the piece. The baneful effects of drunkenness cannot, of course, be set forth without some painful and offensive details, but these are no further exhibited than the necessary connection between cause and consequence makes inevitable. Mr. Reade's drama resolves itself into a picture of domestic happiness invaded and ruined by a fatal propensity.

Its success was due to a combination of causes. "Drink" is not a strongly built play. It consists rather of a succession of tableaux than of a well-knit story. The persons who figure in it do not greatly engage interest either by their worth or by their individuality, nor is the interest which they do excite either of a high or subtle kind. The positions in which they appear, however, are novel and lifelike. As much may be said of the scenery, which includes some striking and characteristic views of Paris. Finally, Mr. Charles Warner's rendering of *Coupeau*—the central figure of the group—was of marked excellence. The actor's genial tenderness and *bonhomie* as the husband and father, in the scene which ends with his fall from the scaffold—one of the chief effects of the piece—were delightfully easy and natural, and his picture in the closing scene of the drunkard alternately repelled and magnetised by the fatal bottle, then a prey to the terrible spectres which crowd upon his delirium, merits no common praise. Much of his acting here was as subdued and

varied as it was truthful and impressive, while the climax of his terror, though appalling and necessarily repellent, was not overcharged. To Mr. William Rignold fell the part of the model artisan *Gouget*, who rises to be a master in his craft. The *Gouget* of "Drink" has nothing of the shy taciturnity which in the novel half conceals his vein of tenderness. On the contrary, he is bluff and outspoken. Mr. Rignold was not deficient in vigour. He delivered his temperance homilies with an energy that denoted conviction. His fault is that in his impersonation he has only one manner. Sturdy honesty of style will not cover all the requirements of a character even so much on the surface as the *Gouget* of "Drink". Mr. Redmund had few opportunities as the insidious rascal *Lantier*; he did not turn these few to the best account. A word of commendation is due to Mr. T. P. Haynes, who infused into the inebriety of *Mes Bottes* a touch of that sly enjoyment with which M. Dailly invests the same personage in Paris. Miss Amy Roselle, capable of strong indignation, but frank, winning, and devoted, was quite equal to the general claims of *Gervaise*; in the crisis of pathos and suffering she left, however, something to be desired. Miss Ada Murray gave such open warning of her evil dispositions by the fixed sinister look that it was marvellous *Gervaise* could have been deceived by her professions of forgiveness and friendship. The gay, good-hearted *Phœbe Sage*—an interpolation of the dramatist—was agreeably sketched by Miss Fanny Leslie. A little lady named Katie Barry represented simply and effectively the character of *Nana*, *Coupeau*'s daughter. It is a relief to find that in "Drink" *Nana* remains a child throughout, and does not develop to the precocious vice of the grown-up girl.

AMONG the representations of the Comédie Française June 14, 1879.
those of the plays of Alfred de Musset and Victor Hugo

have highest interest. The popularity of "Hernani" is attributable in a great measure to the attractions of Mdlle. Bernhardt, and in a less degree to the kind of prejudice which successive governments have displayed with regard to the dramas of its author. No such causes operate with regard to "Les Caprices de Marianne"; no special excellence of cast arrests attention, and no significance, political or social, attaches to the representation. The works of Musset, however, stand by themselves, and have a charm which is wholly their own. Written in a spirit of cynicism which recalls Heine, they have a sadness deeper, because more human, than the gloom of the great German lyrist, while in imagination they stand before all contemporary work. "Les Caprices de Marianne" is a combination of qualities one might almost believe irreconcilable. In vividness of description and in colour it is like a tale of Boccaccio; in the way it blends what is real with what is fantastic it shows the influence of Shakspeare. Its action passes in Naples, and the life of mediæval Italy is depicted with a fidelity that brings each detail before the eyes, yet the scene is in other respects as imaginary as the forest of Arden. It is possible to fancy that the whole is inspired by "Romeo and Juliet". Célio is a French Romeo, and Marianne, the heroine, is of course a married Juliet. Octave, with his graceful mirth and polished banter, is Mercutio. It is true things go wrong. Juliet loves Mercutio and not Romeo, and Romeo, slain in the moment of anticipated happiness, leaves Mercutio the hopeless task of avenging him. This resemblance may be fanciful. What is not fanciful is that a piece written in prose is yet the most exquisite poetry, and that a termination grim, tender, and tragic awaits scenes which are humorous or cynical, and sometimes almost playful in treatment.

A piece of this description is available for the stage under no other conditions than those now realised. The

conventional style of acting and the conventional style of speech employed in classic or *quasi-classic* work are indispensable, and the slightest approach to a realistic exposition would be fatal. When M. Delaunay praises the vintage that has grown on the slopes of Vesuvius or bids an eternal farewell to the happy sports beneath the burning summer twilights; when M. Got, as *Claudio*, rebukes his grim valet Tibia for wishing him to address Hermia, "Y penses-tu ? La mère d'un jeune homme que je serai peut-être obligé de faire poignarder ce soir même ! Sa propre mère, Tibia ! Fi donc ! je ne reconnaîs là ton habitude des convenances"; and when M. Worms, as *Célio*, rushes despairing to meet that death for love's sake which he regards as a blessing rather than a misfortune, the spirit of the play and its fragrance are perfectly expressed.

That the performance of "Hernani" proved the greatest success of the season, so far as this has yet extended, is attributable to Mdlle. Bernhardt. The general representation had conspicuous merits. It is a treat of a high order to see the youth of Spain presented by those who wear the cloak and sword as though their shoulders and loins had been always familiar with them. It is a delight to find preserved an atmosphere of passion, voluptuousness, and romance, into which enters no element or suggestion of every-day life. Excellent as are these things, something more is required to elevate the performance into grandeur. From the admirable to the sublime is a wide step. That the interval between the two was bridged is wholly attributable to Mdlle. Bernhardt. During the early acts there was nothing to suggest what was to follow. Looking admirably picturesque in a mediæval dress, with slashed sleeves, and frills round the neck which set off the lovely carriage of the head, Mdlle. Bernhardt took, as it seemed, but a moderate interest in the scenes before her. Hypercriticism might

almost have suggested that her attitudes, supremely graceful as they seemed, were not quite unstudied, and that more fitful and uncertain moods should be shown by one who was the subject of accidents so strange and surprises so startling. Amends for all were made, however, in the fifth act. In this the languor and the ripe and passionate contentment of the woman when her long-deferred nuptials were at length brought about proved the prelude to one of those electrical displays of passion which, since the disappearance of *Rachel*, have been unknown upon the stage. It is impossible after once seeing them to recall the various changes by which the quick succeeding emotions were indicated. The bursts of wild, savage energy, the convulsive clasp in which she locks the living man whom she may not hold in life, the abject despair of her supplications, the sublime and desperate resolution with which she shares or anticipates her lover's fate, and the sweet, sad melody of her farewell and death, succeed each other with such swiftness they are blended one with another, and the memory finds it difficult to disentangle them. Acting like this has, however, the impress of absolute genius, and the world needs have no doubt that it has the opportunity of contemplating such art as by its appearance marks an epoch. M. Worms, as *Don Carlos*, acts with remarkable dignity and force, and maintains a truly regal presence. M. Maubant gives due impressiveness to the character of *Ruy Gomez*, though he looks almost too stalwart for one whose weakness is a subject of constant allusion. M. Mounet-Sully has burning intensity, and his expression is charged with the strongest emotion. He is not free, however, from rodomontade. Other parts were well sustained, but no other character has sufficient importance to call for comment.

Some of the most brilliant writing and some of the finest characterisation we owe to M. Alexandre Dumas

fils are exhibited in his play "Le Demi-Monde," which has at length sailed through the rocks of the censure into the haven of representation. Its termination is not too manly, according to English ideas, and would certainly be rejected in an English play. What else there is in the work beyond its title to wound English susceptibilities is not easily to be seen. The character of the hero, Olivier de Jalin, is drawn with much spirit, and is presented in delightful fashion by M. Delaunay, whose gaiety is thoroughly natural and unforced. The other characters are presented satisfactorily by MM. Febvre and Thiron, Mesdames Jouassain, Croizette, and Bianca. In Suzanne d'Ange, a part first played by Rose Chéri, Mdlle. Croizette is seen at her best. She does not, however, interfere in any respect with memories of her predecessor. Mdlle. Broisat is again charming as an *ingénue*.

The principal charm in "Le Marquis de Villemer" consists in the extreme refinement and distinction of character of those by whom a simple action is conducted. In the case of this piece also the slightest shade of exaggeration would be fatal to the effect. M. Delaunay as the *Duc*, M. Worms as the *Marquis*, Mdlle. Broisat as *Caroline de St. Geneix*, and Mdlle. Madeleine Brohan as the *Marquise* preserve the aroma of the whole, and invest with extreme tenderness the simplest and most commonplace of stories, that of a mother submitting to her son's union with a girl who has lived in her house in the receipt of wages.

"La Joie fait Peur" of Madame de Girardin reveals M. Got in the familiar part of *Noël*, and Madame Favart in that of *Madame Desaubiers*, of which she gives a very powerful representation. M. Delaunay is not too well suited to the rôle of *Adrien*.

The classic representations must be quickly dismissed. "Le Menteur" shows M. Delaunay at his very best, investing the character of *Dorante* with a seductiveness

which is quite irresistible. With this the character remains in the domain of comedy; without it—and no English actor of the present generation has shown it—it drops into that of farce. M. Got is superb as *Cliton*, the sympathetic and bewildered valet of the hero, and M. Maubant, who makes his first appearance in England, is impressive as *Géronte*. In "Le Médecin malgré Lui," M. Got gave a more forcible, if not more finished, piece of acting as *Sganarelle* and M. Coquelin *cadet* was droll as *Lucas*. "Tartuffe" is noteworthy on account of the extreme plausibility with which M. Febvre invested the hero. Neither the oiliness which we are accustomed to associate with the character nor the ferocity sometimes displayed after detection and exposure was there. It was by instinct rather than observation that Valère, Damis, Cléante, and Elmire detected his intentions. In the classic as in the modern *répertoire* the minor parts were almost invariably well sustained.

"Mdlle. de Belle Isle" was, in some respects, the greatest success yet obtained. In spite of its admiration for the comedy of M. Dumas *filis*, the audience grows a little weary of the long disquisitions by which the author enforces his favourite theories. It received accordingly with delight a play of his father's, in which all is brisk, sparkling, intelligible, and amusing, if a trifle free. It is conceivable, indeed, that a long familiarity with the didactic drama may lead to a reaction in favour of more stimulating fare. The performance is chiefly noteworthy for the triumph of M. Delaunay as *Richelieu*. Mdlle. Broisat is tender as *Mdlle. de Belle Isle*, and in the stronger scenes shows power, without, however, rising fully to their requirements. M. Febvre wants lightness as the *Chevalier d'Aubigny*. In the stage management of this play there is much to be desired. "Il faut qu'une Porte soit ouverte ou fermée" was adequately presented by M. Prudhon and Mdlle. Lloyd.

THE value of the triumph obtained by the Comédie June 21, 1879. Française on its visit to London is, so far as the general body is concerned, diminished by the extreme popularity of one of the company. While a respectable amount of enthusiasm attends ordinary performances, those occasions on which Mdlle. Bernhardt appears create what is currently called a *furore*. It is easy to imagine a circumstance like this exercising a depressing influence upon a body of artists whose special aim is to supply an interpretation of dramatic work in which everything is subordinated to general effect, and no individual prominence, beyond what is incidental to the character of the piece performed, is sought for or allowed. This feeling is likely to be intensified when, on the strength of personal popularity and the need there is for her services, backed up, it may well be supposed, by feminine wilfulness and insubordination, the actress who thus stands forth from her fellows takes means still further to separate herself from them by giving outside performances at which they do not assist. That such feelings should assert themselves in the Comédie Française is natural and pardonable, if, indeed, it is not inevitable. None the less it is foolish. What in most members of the company is fine and highly cultivated talent is in Mdlle. Bernhardt genius. We are not disposed to plunge into the sea of troubles that awaits those who attempt a definition of the quality thus named. We content ourselves with a bare assertion that the powers of dramatic exposition possessed by this lady reach this point. The present generation, which possesses few and distant recollections of Rachel, the last actress of the highest order who belonged to the Comédie Française, attests, it may be too warmly, certainly with something of fanaticism, its delight in a class of acting which seemed to have been lost to the stage, and in so doing contributes to spoil what it so profoundly admires and enjoys. Prudential considerations are not likely to

weigh with the public, nor can they be expected to do so. What the Comédie Française, if it consults its own interests, will do, and indeed does, is to take the gifts the gods provide, and maintain as long as it can a connection that may in time become impossible. Genius is an uncomfortable and unmanageable thing, and in its association with mediocrity or even with excellence it brings endless confusion and discord. The world seldom knows how to treat it, and still more seldom does it know how to treat itself. None the less it must be left to itself. It is impossible to chain it as a watch-dog to a kennel, or to shut it like domestic cattle in a pen. It is often inconvenient and ridiculous, resembling, as Baudelaire says of the poet, the albatross, the

Prince des nuées
Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer :
Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.

These counsels are given with no intention to lecture the Comédie Française, which has shown full capacity to manage its own affairs, but because the matters dealt with have provoked complaints in English newspapers which have been copied into French journals, and there seems a chance that the visit to London, which financially and artistically is a conspicuous success, may prove the contrary as regards the harmony and even the well-being of the institution.

Of the pieces in which Mdlle. Bernhardt has yet appeared, "Phèdre" has produced the most profound effect. The admirable limpidity of diction of the actress gives to the verse of Racine its full value, and her electrical bursts of passion render the stronger scenes profoundly impressive. In the course of the five years during which Mdlle. Bernhardt has held possession of this rôle at the Théâtre Français, she has converted what at first was a fine and original conception into a finished and magnificent piece

of acting. On the mingled elements of seduction and humiliation she exhibits in the second act we have dwelt. In contrast absolutely marvellous with these are the almost lurid gaze with which she contemplates the crime that puts the seal on her baseness, the shuddering horror with which she speaks of her appearance to answer in hell at the tribunal of her father for crimes before unheard of, and the remarkable self-conquest indicated in the closing scene, when the spirit seems by its energy to triumph over dissolution, and compel death itself to wait till the latest word of her dismal confession is made. In this character the interest of the play centres. It is pleasant to be able to speak highly of the *Hippolyte* of M. Mounet-Sully, the *Aricie* of Mdlle. Martin, which was excellent, and the *Œnone* of Madame Provost-Ponsin. The general interpretation is, indeed, highly to be commended.

Voltaire's tragedy of "Zaïre" is better than its reputation. Its plot is interesting, the conflict in the bosom of the heroine, who, while loving passionately her Mohammedan captor, discovers she is a Lusignan, and is bound by creed, by family ties, and by family entreaties to reject him, leading to some very strong and original situations. In his "Lettre à M. de la Roque" Voltaire says: "'Zaïre' est la première pièce de théâtre dans laquelle j'aie osé m'abandonner à toute la sensibilité de mon cœur ; c'est la seule tragédie tendre que j'aie faite. Je croyais, dans l'âge même des passions les plus vives, que l'amour n'était point fait pour le théâtre tragique. Je ne regardais cette faiblesse que comme un défaut charmant qui avilissait l'art des Sophocle." In this case departure from rules led to results that were never obtained by their observance, and "Zaïre" may dispute with any of Voltaire's dramas the right to rank as his masterpiece. The character of the heroine offers few opportunities for the display of tragic passion, and it is accordingly the more

tender side of Mdlle. Bernhardt's art which is revealed. One or two magnificent outbursts showed the nervous power the actress possesses. The whole performance conveyed, however, a notion of fatigue and lassitude. M. Mounet-Sully as *Orosmane* presented an admirable picture. He is, according to English theories of art, wanting in the art of repose. M. Maubant as *Lusignan* looked well fitted to lead the Christian hosts to combat with the Pagans, but forgot apparently that his voice as well as his frame have been injured by long confinement, and that when he appears he is practically moribund. The *Slave* of M. Davrigny was magnificently made up; a more sinister-looking figure never kept watch in a seraglio. Garrick played *Lusignan* in Aaron Hill's version of "Zaire," which, under the title of "Zara," takes rank as the best of Hill's dramatic works. Mrs. Siddons subsequently appeared as the heroine. Bond, the first *Lusignan* at the production of "Zara" at Drury Lane, 12th January, 1736, fainted on the stage, was carried home, and died next morning. It is curious to find Reed taxing Hill with plagiarism from a playwright named Hudson, while Voltaire's share in the work passes unacknowledged or unknown.

In "Le Sphinx" Mdlle. Bernhardt shared the honours of the performance with Mdlle. Croizette. The actress last named displayed remarkable passion in her original rôle of *Blanche*, and the scene of her death by the poison contained in the bezel of her ring was a marvellous piece of stage realism. Mdlle. Bernhardt meantime had little to do until the fourth act, when a burst of frenzy startled those who had before admired the perfection of her ordinary method. M. Worms as *Savigny* had a difficult part, in which he acquitted himself well. M. Maubant was the *Amiral*; M. Febvre was well got up, and displayed his customary stolidity as *Lord Astley*; and M. Coquelin *cadet* went dangerously near extravagance as *Ulric* the musician.

“Le Gendre de M. Poirier” gave opportunity for a display of masterly acting by M. Got as *Poirier* and M. Delaunay as the *Marquis*. So finely contrasted were these two performances, the play proved the most exhilarating that has yet been given. Mdlle. Croizette as *Antoinette* was also excellent, and MM. Thiron, Barré, and Garraud supplied three pictures each in its way unsurpassable.

“L’Ami Fritz” is so familiar in England it is needless to dwell upon it further than to say that M. Febvre plays once more in admirable style the part of *Fritz Kobus* the young Alsatian farmer, the best in his *répertoire*, in which he has already appeared in London. M. Got gives a thoughtful and conscientious performance of the *Rabbi David*. M. Coquelin *cadet* is droll as *Frédéric*, and Mdlle. Reichenberg sympathetic as *Suzel*.

Among less important works, “Le Luthier de Crémone” deserves notice for the admirable acting of M. Coquelin as *Filippo*, and “Le Petit Hôtel” for the extreme drollery of the same actor as *Boismartin*. There remains only to be mentioned “Les Plaideurs” of Racine, which, with “Le Misanthrope,” was given at the morning performance of last Saturday, and introduced M. Got in the part of *L’Intimé*, in which, so far as the stage of to-day is concerned, he is quite unapproachable.

IF the most popular portion of the *répertoire* of the June 28, 1879. Comédie Française is found in the drama of M. Victor Hugo, that of Alfred de Musset comes in general estimation immediately behind it. More interest indeed, of a kind, attaches to the performance of “Les Caprices de Marianne” or “On ne Badine pas avec l’Amour” than to that of “Hernani” or “Ruy Blas”. Translations of the plays of M. Hugo are not unknown, and one or two of them have attained considerable popularity upon the stage. The comedies or the proverbs of Musset mean-

while defy the translator, and their representation calls for a class of acting of which our stage knows nothing. Not easy is it, indeed, to see, after the retirement of M. Delaunay, whenever that event may take place, how these works are to remain on the stage. M. Delaunay is the ideal of Valentin and Perdican, parts in which no other actor has shown a capacity to approach him. It will be a great misfortune if the works of Musset, which have a *cachet* as distinct as that of M. Hugo, or indeed of Shakspeare, are driven from the stage for the want of interpreters. The representation of "Il ne faut jurer de Rien" is noteworthy for the excellent performances of M. Delaunay as Valentin and Mdlle. Madeleine Brohan as La Baronne, and for the complete failure of M. Got as L'Abbé. When, eight years ago, M. Got played L'Abbé, it was one of the best parts in his *répertoire*. It was difficult to estimate too highly the powers of an actor who filled up with art so consummate a character the mere outline of which was presented. Unfortunately the great actor is sometimes as vain as the small. Because he made much of a part M. Got seeks to make more, the result being that he completely overbalances himself, and that the performance is poor, and as an attempted interpretation contemptible. A village *curé* is often, doubtless, ridiculous enough. An *abbé*, however, who plays piquet with *la baronne*, even though he may undertake parish work and have appointments with the sacristan and the beadle, is not in the habit of wearing a preposterous hat and running about like a madman. Strange indeed is it to see a man such as M. Got, whose place is at the very top of his profession, fall into an error which springs ordinarily from the ill-regulated vanity and ambition of youth. M. Got's very eminence is, however, a reason why an exhibition like this should incur gravest condemnation. As *La Baronne* Mdlle. Madeleine Brohan is perfect. Her dignity and repose of style are wholly suited to the part

M. Delaunay meanwhile, as *Valentin*, displays to highest advantage the animal spirits and conceit which are the foundation of the character, and steers entirely clear of the vulgarity to which a less delicate interpretation would lead. M. Thiron is a good *Vanbuck* and Mdlle. Reichemberg an agreeable *Cécile*.

As "Barberine" is not in the actual *répertoire* of the Comédie Française, and as "Le Chandelier" is, for obvious reasons, not likely to be given in England, the more dramatic works of Musset are exhausted, so far as the English stage is concerned, with the production of "On ne Badine pas avec l'Amour".

This favourite play is perhaps the most characteristic of Musset's dramas. In none other are tenderness and passion so strangely blended with mockery, in none other is the full value shown of a method which unites an intensity almost Shakspearian to a heat of imaginative expression suggestive of Byron, and a serious and cynical humour the direct bequest of Heine. In the outset the play is as much a pastoral as the "Aminta," the "Fidalma," the "Pastor Fido," or any of the dramatic idyls of the Italians. The end of all is death, however, and the motto of the play might be taken from Shakspeare:—

Golden lads and girls all must
As chimney-sweepers come to dust.

A difficult task is accomplished in presenting a piece of this kind in a manner that shall produce no feeling of disenchantment. More than this is done in the present instance. M. Delaunay is the *Perdican* of the play, and his petulant wooing of Rosette is perfect; Mdlle. Croizette is a conceivable *Camille*; and Mdlle. Reichemberg is an agreeable *Rosette*. It is, however, strange to say, in the minor characters that the triumph over difficulties is most remarkable. Nothing can well be better than the presentation by M. Truffier of the *Chœur des Jeunes Gens*, or that

by M. Richard of the *Chœur des Vieillards*. The two pedants and gourmands, *Bridaine* and *Blasius*, were fairly depicted, and the *Baron* of M. Thiron and the *Dame Pluche* of Madame Jouassain were excellent. A more attractive performance is not often seen on the stage.

“Le Jeu de l’Amour et du Hasard” of Marivaux proved one of the brightest and most attractive performances yet given. The *Pasquin* (Arlequin in the original) of M. Coquelin is an absolutely unsurpassable performance, and the *Lisette* of Mdlle. Samary is full of brightness and animation. M. Barré as *Orgon*, M. Prudhon as *Dorante*, M. Boucher as *Mario*, and Mdlle. Broisat as *Silvia* made up a cast which left nothing to desire. The action of this piece is more interesting than that of “She Stoops to Conquer,” with which it is natural to compare it, since the episode of the stolen casket, taken by Goldsmith from *Albumazar*, distracts the attention, which in “Le Jeu de l’Amour et du Hasard” is entirely fixed on the romantic portion of the story. Marivaux’s comedy was produced at the Théâtre des Italiens in 1730, while that of Goldsmith did not appear at Covent Garden till forty-three years later.

In the “*Gringoire*” of M. Théodore de Banville, a graceful dramatic sketch, which was given on the same night as “On ne Badine pas avec l’Amour,” and had no need to blush at the association, M. Coquelin showed as *Gringoire*, the *balladin* whom, by an anachronism, M. Hugo introduced into “*Notre Dame de Paris*,” the tender and emotional side of his genius. M. Maubant makes up as a rather substantial *Louis XI.*, and M. Sylvain is a sinister *Olivier le Daim*. The trifles obtained an enthusiastic reception, the recitation of the “*Ballade des Pendus*” and that of the “*Ballade des Pauvres Gens*” eliciting loud and well-deserved applause.

“Mdlle. de la Seiglière” is an excellent and a thoroughly characteristic work of M. Jules Sandeau.

With this version of one of his own novels M. Sandeau made his *début* as a dramatist, and it has now for close on thirty years retained its place as a masterpiece. Its success is attributable in part to the thoroughly sympathetic nature of the plot, in part to the admirable picture it supplies of an old aristocrat "fallen on evil times". The Marquis de la Seiglière is one of the finest types of modern fiction. The revolution has passed over France with no other result than sending him to spend a quarter of a century in exile in Germany. The Emperor is M. de Buonaparte, and a *huissier* of the Court, or even an *avocat*, is a being who is to be frightened out of his house by the threat of having his ears cut off. He is, indeed, a *grand seigneur* of the time of Louis XVI., and has yielded no single right that has belonged to his ancestors. The spectacle of a man such as this in open conflict with Napoleonic ideas has extreme interest, and as the psychology of the play is backed up by a genuine love interest, the result is good. M. Thiron is scarcely strong enough for a character such as the *Marquis*, and presents the comic aspect of his physiognomy rather than the more dignified. M. Coquelin gives a capital picture of the *avocat Destournelles*, Mdlle. Madeleine Brohan is admirable in all respects as *La Baronne*, and Mdlle. Broisat as the heroine displays grace and emotional power.

In spite of the excellent performance by Madame Favart of the part of *Madame Bernard* and M. Coquelin's humour as *Léopold*, the performance of "Les Fourchambault" is not specially noteworthy. M. Got's get-up as *Bernard* is fine, and M. Barré as *Fourchambault* and Madame Provost-Ponsin as *Madame Fourchambault* are satisfactory. The interpretation of "The Crisis," Mr. Albery's version of the play, had points which would compare favourably with that now given.

July 5, 1879

THOUGH inferior in every respect to "Le Mariage de Figaro," "Le Barbier de Séville" of Beaumarchais is interesting, both for its characterisation and for the merits of its dialogue. Taking the accepted types of the drama of Molière and of Regnard, Beaumarchais elevated Léandre and Eraste into Almaviva, and Mascarille and Crispin into Figaro. That he showed the commencement of that rebellion of the valet against the ill-treatment and blows to which he had been accustomed, which was one of the many indications to the coming revolution, while his predecessors are silent concerning it, must of course be attributed to the later period at which he wrote. The hundred years which elapsed between the production of "L'Avare" and that of "Le Barbier de Séville" had witnessed little absolute change, but much preparation for change. The forces which were to result in upheaval had accumulated. What difference had arisen in the relation between master and servant is shown by comparing the language of Maître Jacques in "L'Avare" with that of Figaro in "Le Barbier de Séville". "Passe encore pour mon maître," says the former, when he has been beaten by Harpagon, "il a quelque droit de me battre"; while Figaro, acknowledging the existence of a similar state of things, but rebelling against it, avoids notice of his superiors: "Je me crus trop heureux d'en être oublié, persuadé qu'un grand nous fait assez de bien quand il ne nous fait pas de mal". For the rest the story is a pleasant if farcical imbroglio, with theatrical and original situations, which lost their freshness in subsequent days, but belong, so far as invention is concerned, to Beaumarchais; the dialogue is admirably bright, and its animal spirits are irresistible. M. Coquelin's *Figaro* is unsurpassable. By physical gifts as by training, M. Coquelin is specially qualified for this class of parts, of which he is the best living representative, and, indeed, the best representative the present generation has seen.

M. Febvre's *Le Comte* was moderately satisfactory, and M. Coquelin *cadet's Bazile* had a thoroughly comic physiognomy. Mdlle. Barretta was *Rosine*, and M. Thiron *Bartholo*.

In "L'Avare" M. Got gave a representation of Harpagon altogether masterly. In the treatment of the passion of avarice Molière seems for once to have gone outside his usual bounds, and the scene in which Harpagon, when robbed, seizes upon himself as the imagined robber, and declares his wish to hang all mankind, is conceived and executed in a spirit not unlike that which influenced Marlowe when he wrote the "Jew of Malta". Of the opportunities afforded him M. Got took full advantage, and the tragical side of the character, for such it may almost be called, received fine and most powerful interpretation. With M. Delaunay as *Cléante*, M. Worms as *Valère*, M. Thiron as *Maître Jacques*, M. Coquelin *cadet* as *Laflèche*, and Mdlle. Dinah-Félix as *Frosine*, this play received a brilliant interpretation. The voice of Mdlle. Barretta, who played *Elise*, is still so affected by cold that its state amounts to a disqualification for the stage. In "Le Dépit Amoureux," which is played in two acts, Mdlle. Samary is a piquant *Marinette*, M. Coquelin *cadet* an amusing *Gros-René*, and M. Truffier a satisfactory *Mascarille*.

Leaving on one side the character of Hermione, in which Rachel obtained a brilliant success, Mdlle. Bernhardt took, in the revival of "Andromaque," the subordinate and comparatively colourless character of Andromaque. In this she has little to do except to display the grief and desolation of a faithful consort mourning over her dead lord. At one point, however, when Pyrrhus makes the death of her son the penalty for the rejection of his suit, an opportunity is afforded of which the actress took instant advantage. Her recoil of horror, and the manner in which she flung herself at the feet of her

conqueror, had the charm and power which characterise her acting at its best. That the entire performance had infinite grace and delicacy need scarcely be said. M. Mounet-Sully acted very finely as *Oreste*. He has excellent gifts, but yields to a temptation to abuse his magnificent voice. Mdlle. Dudlay played with passion as *Hermione*, but allowed her method to be seen. She is a clever and thoughtful student, but has shown as yet no power to go out of herself. M. Sylvain's *Pyrrhus* merits a word of praise. "L'Étincelle" of M. Pailleron a piece of no special merit, deserves attention on account of the display of archness of Mdlle. Samary in a character half *ingénue*, half romp. M. Delaunay and Mdlle. Croizette play well the two lovers in whose breast *l'étincelle* is lighted.

The performance of "Ruy Blas," on which many expectations had been built, resulted in disappointment. At one or two points Mdlle. Bernhardt showed her full power, but her entire presentation is best described as graceful and picturesque. There is little for the actress to do except to express *ennui* at court life, and a strong yearning for love to break the monotony of an existence which is, in fact, imprisonment. When in the gallant courtier the queen finds the unknown worshipper whose silent homage has long been her one interest in life, she displays some of that languorous charm which is a valuable portion of her means in art; when subsequently, on his revealing himself as the patriot whose chief aim is the salvation of his country, she yields to the impulses that beset and besiege her, and stoops and kisses him on the forehead, the contact, slight as it is, almost overmasters her, and supreme longing and utter incapacity to resist are shown with magic skill. At last, when the climax is reached, and she finds her lover at her feet, dying at what he takes to be her bidding, there is one burst of supreme passion, in which she clasps his head to

her bosom, fondles it, and recoils shuddering from the lips already stiffening with death which she presses against her own. In these situations the acting was fine, and at the point last named it was magnificent. M. Mounet-Sully's *Ruy Blas* was a failure so complete it does not even call for criticism. While disapproving always of M. Mounet-Sully's method, we have seen in his acting proof of conception, and have found some of his outbursts impressive. In "Ruy Blas," until the last act was reached, he was simply wearisome. His acting had not even the picturesqueness in which generally it has never failed. *Ruy Blas* among the grandes of the Spanish Court looked the lackey he was, and his rodomontades could never have secured him anything beyond personal chastisement. It is melancholy to contemplate a failure so complete. In the last act one or two powerful bursts elicited from the audience warm recognition, and proved the actor capable of an interpretation altogether different from that he gave. M. Coquelin's *Don César* was a singularly bright and virile performance, full of colour and displaying admirably the more imaginative side of M. Coquelin's talents. M. Febvre was an admirable *Don Salluste*. Most of the subordinate characters were well played, and many of the figures about the Spanish Court had striking individuality.

The performance of "Mercadet le Faiseur" left little to desire. M. Got, whose masterpiece it is, played the hero in a style quite unsurpassable, from a French standpoint. That the kind of alternate rebuke and cajolery he employed would prove effective with English creditors may be doubted. It is not, however, with English creditors he has to deal. It is, meanwhile, difficult to praise too highly the perfection of detail in his acting and the breadth of the general result. Excellent support was afforded him by M. Febvre, whose *De la Brive* was equally excellent in make-up and in acting, by M. Barré

as *Verdelin*, M. Coquelin *cadet* as *Violette*, the lachrymose creditor, and M. Truffier as *Justin*. The claim of "Mercadet" to rank as a comic masterpiece becomes more evident with each successive representation. With it was given "L'Été de la Saint-Martin," a clever little one-act piece of MM. Meilhac and Halévy, which has been previously seen in England, and was on this occasion very naturally and pleasantly played by MM. Thiron and Prudhon, and Mesdames Jouassain and Barretta.

July 21, 1879. "LE MARIAGE DE VICTORINE" is announced by George Sand as having been written "pour faire suite au 'Philosophe sans le savoir' de Sedaine". Like most continuations it is weaker than the original. To say this will appear to most English readers, to whom the name of Sedaine conveys nothing whatever, a condemnation of the modern writer. Those, however, who, like George Sand herself, know the value of that French Ben Jonson, who commenced life as a mason to end it as a member of the Académie Française, and in the course of his career, besides writing one comedy that may almost count as a dramatic masterpiece, assigned to comic opera the shape it has since maintained, will not under-estimate the difficulty of carrying out in a second play the few gracious hints of an affection between young Vanderk and Victorine which Sedaine conveys. Vanderk *fils* has entrusted to Victorine the *montre à répétition* which his sister has given him, and has instructed her to surrender it in the morning to him alone. At the time when she should yield it up he is fighting a duel, which constitutes the principal motive of the play. A report that he is dead reaches the family and plunges it in despair, when Vanderk *fils* again appears alive and well. Two sides between Vanderk *fils* and Victorine and a word of rebuke from Vanderk *père* supply the basis of "Le Mariage de Victorine". The conversation is as follows:—

VICTORINE (*à M. Vanderk fils*). Qu'à moi, qu'à moi, oh cruel !

M. VANDERK fils (*à Victorine*). Que je suis aise de te revoir !

M. VANDERK *père*. Victorine, taisez-vous.

There is, it must be confessed, in these words sufficient hint of a secret attachment between Victorine and the young Vanderk on which to build a new play, and if the last speech had been delivered by Antoine, the father of Victorine, the lines of the story taken by George Sand would have been laid down. "Le Mariage de Victorine" shows the heroine, at her father's bidding, about to marry Fulgence, a clerk in the "Maison Vanderke" (*sic*). Her heart is, however, given to Alexis Vanderke. At the moment when an act of self-sacrifice of which her father knows and approves is about to be carried out, Victorine sees again her lover, who has compromised her somewhat, but who demands and ultimately obtains her hand. That the closing scenes of this piece are supremely tender and touching no one who knows the workmanship of George Sand will doubt. The whole, however, lacks that strange pastoral delicacy and charm which Sedaine was able to communicate to his work, assigning in so doing to every scene some special and particular grace. There is, indeed, in Sedaine something of Goldsmith. At the first production of "Le Mariage de Victorine" at the Gymnase (26th Nov., 1851), it had a cast such as the Comédie Française itself cannot rival, Mdlle. Rose Chéri being *Victorine*; M. Dupuis, *Vanderke père*; M. Bressant, *Vanderke fils*; M. Geoffroy, *Antoine*; and M. Lafontaine, *Fulgence*. Nothing in the present cast was, indeed, strong enough to suggest a comparison. Mdlle. Barretta displayed much tenderness as *Victorine*, a part in which, if we remember rightly, she made an early, if not a first, appearance at the Théâtre Français. In the other characters MM. Maubant, Barré, Davrigny, and Baillet, and Mesdames Provost-Ponsin and Martin were satisfactory, and no more.

“Les Fourberies de Scapin,” which followed, was noteworthy for the magnificent performance of Scapin by M. Coquelin. A finer representation cannot well be conceived, the wagging of a character in which so much that is Greek is preserved being as effective as it could well be rendered. M. Coquelin *cadet* as *Sylvestre* and Mdlle. Samary as *Zerbinette* were also excellent.

The performance of “Les Femmes Savantes” may be accepted as showing to highest advantage the powers of the company in the comedy of Molière. A cast which included as the two pedants *Trissotin* and *Vadius* MM. Got and Coquelin; as the comic *bourgeois*, so loud-spoken in the absence of his wife and so meek in her presence, M. Thiron; as the lover, M. Delaunay; as the three *femmes savantes*, Mesdames Madeleine Brohan, Favart, and Jouassain; as the heroine, Mdlle. Barretta; and as the *soubrette*, Mdlle. Samary, is quite unsurpassable, and may, indeed, be held to be almost exhaustive of the comic talent of the company. Not surprising is it, accordingly, that the theatre was crowded to suffocation by those anxious to witness this performance. The only case in which we could fancy an improvement is in the *Trissotin* of M. Got, which, as readers of Molière know, is a character designed for l’Abbé Cotin. M. Got played admirably and gave the part a distinct individuality. We should like to see more of the smug self-satisfaction of authorship, however. The famous sonnet should be dropped gently from the lips, as if every word conveyed a species of aroma to the brain of the reader. Still the entire performance of this comedy may be pronounced supreme. A just conception of the power of the company might more easily be obtained from it than from any other representation that has been given. If any vindication of the Comédie Française is necessary, or if any justification of English raptures concerning it is required, this performance might supply it.

CHAPTER XIV.

Gaiety: *Representations of the Comédie Française*, “*Philiberte*,” “*L’Étourdi*,” “*Gringoire*,” “*Davenant*,” etc.—*Haymarket*: “*Romeo and Juliet*,” “*As You Like It*”.—*Lyceum*: “*Zillah*,” drama in five acts, by *Palgrave Simpson* and *Claude Templar*.—*Criterion*: “*Betsy*,” comedy in three acts, by *F. C. Burnand*.—*Imperial Theatre*: “*The Beaux’ Stratagem*”.—*Court*: Revival of “*Fernande*”.—*Lyceum*: “*Daisy’s Escape*,” comedietta by *A. W. Pinero*.—*Prince of Wales’s*: “*Duty*,” a comedy in four acts, by *James Albery*.—*Lyceum*: Revival of “*The Iron Chest*”.—*St. James’s*: “*Monsieur le Duc*,” a play in one act, by *Val. Prinsep*.—*Lyceum*: “*The Merchant of Venice*”.

THE idea of reviving the “*Philiberte*” of M. ^{July 19, 1879.} *Émile Augier* seems to have been as sudden and unexpected as it was curious. Clever as is the versification of this comedy, and bright and animated as is its dialogue, its action is nugatory, and its principal character inconceivable outside the domain of fairyland, wherein it has already been turned to profitable account. *Philiberte* is, indeed, *Cinderella*. In spite of all evidence to the contrary, she believes herself plain and stupid, and she refuses with insult the advances of a young and ardent lover, because she conceives it impossible his desires should extend beyond her fortune to herself. From her errors she is at last won by a device altogether worthy of the period—about 1775—in which the action passes. A young nobleman, who, as she

subsequently states, is no more than her equal in rank, proposes calmly to make her his mistress. This proof that she is able to inspire passion so gratifies her she forgets for a while to snub the cavalier young gentleman, and runs off to make up matters with her early lover, who, though a little intractable, is bound in the end to yield to her very openly expressed preference. It is singular how good a play, from the literary standpoint, this fable, so weak and preposterous, supplies. The heroine, the Chevalier de Talmay, and his uncle, the Duc de Chamaraule, indulge, however, in thoroughly delightful badinage, and the charm of the dialogue atones for the feebleness of the plot and the triviality of the incidents. Two or three things concerning this play appear worthy of mention. First produced at the Gymnase on the 19th of March, 1853, it elicited such unfavourable criticisms from a portion of the press that M. Augier, "pour encourager les autres," judged it expedient to challenge one of his critics. His choice fell upon M. Monselet. The duel which ensued was without results, but the sting of the criticism was of service to the dramatist, whose next work, "Le Gendre de M. Poirier" (written in conjunction with M. Jules Sandeau), was a masterpiece. Four years later "Philiberte" was seized by the Comédie Française, by whom it was produced on the 1st of August, 1857. How poor is the representation now supplied may be seen by contrasting the cast assigned the play on three separate occasions on which it has been produced or revived. The rôle of the heroine, it may be stated, was originally intended for Rachel :—

	<i>Gymnase.</i>	<i>Français.</i>	<i>Gaiety.</i>
Duc de Chamaraule.....	Dupuis	Samson	Thiron
Chev. de Talmay.....	Bressant	Bressant	Boucher
Comte d'Ollivon.....	Landrol	Leroux	Prudhon
Raymond.....	Lafontaine	Maillart	Baillet
Mme. de Grandchamps..	Mélanie	Lambquin	Jouassain
Julie.....	Figeac	Figeac	Barretta
Philiberte.....	Rose-Chéri	Judith	Broisat

On the latest occasion Madame Jouassain and M. Thiron showed themselves admirable actors. The part of the Chevalier was quite out of the reach of M. Boucher, and should have been played by M. Delaunay, while Mdlle. Broisat, though gracious and tender as she always is, was also unable to make anything of the character of Philiberte.

In "L'Etourdi" M. Delaunay was *Lélie*; M. Coquelin, *Mascarille*; M. Barré, *Anselm*; M. Coquelin *cadet*, *Trufaldin*; M. Martel, *Pandolphe*; Madame Lloyd, *Hippolyte*; and Mdlle. Bianca, *Célie*. The interpretation was adequate, M. Coquelin's performance being especially admirable.

The programme at the closing representation consisted of "Gringoire" and "L'Étincelle," with the fifth act of "Hernani," a recitation of "La Bénédiction" of M. Coppée by M. Febvre, and a first representation of a new comedy by M. Jean Aicard, entitled "Davenant". The assumed relationship between Shakspeare and Davenant, begotten of Anthony à Wood's assertion that Shakspeare was in the habit, when passing through Oxford, of resting at the Crown Tavern, kept by the elder Davenant, supplies the fable of a piece originally intended for Mdlle. Sarah Bernhardt, and called "Shakspeare et Fils". William Davenant serves in the same house in Oxford which Shakspeare previously visited, and is from some prompting of affinity a perpetual student and lover of the works of his father. Some disparaging remarks concerning Shakspeare which drop from the lips of Lord Pembroke, who, with other noblemen, is drinking at the Crown, provoke an indignant rejoinder from the lad. Encouraged by the aristocratic guests, William Davenant commences an eloquent defence of Shakspeare, and quotes approved passages from his plays, with the effect of convincing Lord Pembroke of "rash judgment," and of winning for the reciter the protection of Lord Southampton, the son of the well-known

friend of Shakspeare. This is as much of the plot of an ingenious piece, which is, of course, characteristically French in conception and execution, as needs to be told. Davenant the elder is, it may be stated, aware of the relationship between the youth he has nourished as his own and Shakspeare, his wife having on her deathbed confessed the truth. After testing the loyalty of the youth, he admits in a lachrymose fashion, worthy of the lugubrious innkeeper whom A Wood describes, that it is the voice of blood which speaks in the desire of the lad for the stage, and sends him with Lord Southampton to London, to win the notable advantages which befell him—a reputation wholly beyond his merits, the friendship of Suckling, the protection of the Duke of Newcastle and that of Milton, a knighthood gained on the field of battle, the laureateship, and one or two other qualifications and disqualifications, which rendered him for ever afterwards the butt of such wags as Suckling, Rochester, and Sir John Mennis. M. Got plays superbly as the *innkeeper*, and Mdlle. Dudlay, as *William Davenant*, speaks with admirable elocution and dramatic power the passages from Shakspeare put into the mouth of the hero. MM. Prudhon, Boucher, Truffier, etc., look very gallant as the Court rufflers who invade the Oxford inn. It is, however, distinctly wrong on the part of one or two of these actors to present noblemen at their meals eating with a comic diligence copied from the starving hero of “Gringoire”.

The reception of the Comédie Française on the closing night of the performances had warmth which shows how genuine admiration has been inspired by its performances. There was, indeed, about the demonstration a ring of sincerity which, on the part of audiences such as assembled at the Gaiety, might well inspire pride and gratitude in its objects. It is not *à propos* of the Comédie Française, but rather as a reflection upon humanity in general and actors in particular, we add that the diet upon

which gratitude soonest starves is benefits, and that vanity is an absolute antidote against pride.

A COMPARISON between the performances of Molière July 26, 1879. by the Comédie Française and those of Shakspeare by any existing English company is not likely to prove gratifying to national vanity. Out of such resources as our stage at present possesses a management anxious to do its best for the public may select a company capable of giving, with a respectable amount of *ensemble*, not only pieces of the modern *répertoire*, but works which require for their adequate interpretation genuine delicacy and cultivated taste. Actors are naturally quick to learn, and the influence of capable stage management, such as has obtained at houses like the Prince of Wales's or the Court, is immediately apparent. To teach a company, however, to speak blank verse is a vastly different matter, seeing that there are no teachers and no material on which to work. Each successive representation witnesses, therefore, a further declension, and the very meaning of a blank verse play seems, so far as the majority of actors is concerned, to be lost. In the revivals at the Haymarket accordingly the interest is simply monopolised by the performance of Miss Neilson. For the rest, we find an actress capable of interpolating in the part of the Nurse a phrase like " You are not going to leave your poor old nurse behind you ? " while the affectations of manner or the mincing ways with which certain characters are presented rouse that most tolerant of things, an average British audience, to open derision. Miss Neilson's *Juliet* has, however, its old charm, and is still, in the poetry and beauty of the early scenes and the intensity and passion of the later, a performance which may be put beside the highest accomplishment of the Comédie Française. In presenting the delicate and fragrant aspect of Juliet's character, that

combination of girlish tenderness and overmastering passion which constitutes its chief charm, Miss Neilson has scarcely a rival, while in showing the blank desolation and appalling terror of the later scenes she is quite unequalled. Over the whole, moreover, she drops the veil of doom. From the first the shadow of fate is on the young front, and presage of the grim end of her sad nuptials darkens their commencement, the laugh is arrested on the lip, and the hope which rises into the air droops and folds its wings before its first flight is accomplished. How essential a part of the character of Juliet this is, is seen at once by those who mark her own utterances and those of others concerning her, who see how on the first aspect of Romeo, and the growth of what she calls the "prodigious birth of love," the thought is forced home that her grave is like to be her wedding bed; how when the first breathings of love are poured into her ear she avows, with sad prevision:—

I have no joy of this contract to-night,
It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden,
Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be
Ere one can say it lightens;

how at the close of nuptial caresses she sees her husband
As one dead in the bottom of a tomb;

and how her mother anticipates by a few hours only the actual event when, with terrible outspokenness, she expresses her wish

The fool were married to her grave.

So fine a presentation as Miss Neilson supplies, however, needs such support on the part of other actors as it does not receive, since the *Friar* of Mr. Howe and the *Mercutio* of Mr. Harcourt, the latter a clever and very animated performance, alone call for notice. It may be mentioned, *à propos* to revivals of "Romeo and Juliet," that when a change, necessary enough, is made in the text, and the age of the heroine is altered from "not

fourteen" to "not eighteen" years, other passages should be altered to correspond. After saying of Juliet that

Come Lammas eve at night shall she be fourteen,
the Nurse proceeds to add—

'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years,
And she was weaned,

which of course, when eighteen is put in the place of fourteen, gives an age of seven as that of weaning. The substitution of "some fifteen years" for "eleven years" is to be recommended.

In "As You Like It," Miss Neilson is coquettish, bright, and charming. In no other hands has the performance of this character proved equally attractive or amusing. Some sacrifice of poetry is made, however, in obtaining this result, and a moderating of the animal spirits is to be recommended as a means of preserving the aroma. In adding to the business of *Rosalind* Miss Neilson has not improved it. The support she received was most inadequate. Quite pitiable was it to hear the music of Shakspeare marred by the omission or interpolation of syllables. Two actors alone, Mr. Howe, excellent as *Adam*, and Mr. Grisdale, as the banished *Duke*, were free from this defect. So deliberate and pedantic is, however, Mr. Grisdale's style, that the public owes him less thanks than otherwise it would for his correctness.

AMONG causes of the decline of romantic drama may be counted the fact that audiences are growing too sophisticated to believe in the old agencies to which its effects, mysterious or "sensational," are due. Genius no less powerful and exceptional than that of M. Victor Hugo is necessary to reconcile the public to the machinery of secret doors, mysterious passages, and the like, and the most successful plays the author of "Hernani" even has written are those in which such resources are least

frequently employed. The public has still some regard for a "sensation leap," or anything in which real or assumed activity is shown. It is now, however, suspicious of effects which used at one time to move its admiration, and if it can trace a concealed agency is likely to treat it with derision. Miss Geneviève Ward has lost sight of this truth, and has commenced her short season at the Lyceum Theatre with a piece the main interest of which rests on devices such as move a modern audience to irreverent hilarity.

That it rests upon tricks with which the playgoer is familiar is not the only or the chief fault in "*Zillah*". It is that nevertheless which contributes most to its failure. The piece is structurally weak, is nebulous in story and overcrowded with incident. It is, moreover, in the main badly acted. Out of the conditions, then, which surround its birth most are unfavourable, and success could scarcely have been hoped. The best work in the meantime which it contains is not of a kind to appeal to a general public. An interesting glimpse is afforded into the state of Toulouse at the time when the Counts of Toulouse, though nominally vassals of France, were in fact more powerful than their suzerains, and when the streets of the capital of Languedoc saw the fiercest portion of that carnage which, commencing with Saracen invasions, lasted almost to the present century, and which, indeed, renders the city to this moment the saddest and most haunted of all abodes of civilisation. One may, with little exercise of imagination, fix the action in the reign (for such it practically was) of Raymond VI. or VII. The Papal emissaries are there to urge the Count to fresh persecutions; the Papal army, assumably under Simon de Montfort, is on the banks of the Garonne; and Raymond himself, timid, vacillating, and aghast, sees proofs of treason in every action of those around him. An English audience is not likely to attach much

importance to points of this kind, and the heroic action is meanwhile complicated by the private feuds of gipsies, the escapades of travelling tinkers, and the comic perplexities of money-hunting Jews. These things interested but slightly, and as the main intrigue, the resemblance between two sisters, did not interest at all, the result was failure. It may, indeed, be doubted whether any play that turns upon a child stolen by gipsies will again be tolerated by the public. Such individuality as was possessed by the characters was for the most part lost in the representation. Raymond of Toulouse was obviously intended to stand forth a distinct and recognisable, if not exactly an historical, figure. Mr. Mead, however, had apparently formed no other conception of him than that of an old gentleman who, for want of anything better, takes refuge in noise, and shouts forth injunctions more noteworthy for violence than coherency. Mr. Calhaem as a Jew showed comic terror in a manner that might have been effective had he not given the man a physiognomy which was simply ridiculous. Mr. M'Intyre had apparently forgotten all the teaching of burlesque, and presented a gipsy in a style so melodramatic it moved the audience to absolute laughter. One or two characters escape censure. Miss Ward played the two heroines, one a supposed gipsy, the other her sister, a daughter of the Count of Toulouse; and besides presenting distinctly the identity of each—not a difficult task—showed in the closing scenes some real power. Mr. Forbes-Robertson, who makes long strides forward in his profession, was excellent as a travelling tinker whose conversation is interlarded with proverbs, some of them sufficiently amusing. Mr. Barnes and Mr. Herbert were respectable, the latter as the hero of the piece, the former as the arch villain; and Miss Roland Phillips, a daughter of the late Watts Phillips, lightened up the whole by some natural and gracious acting as a youth. One unpleasant feature

in the play is that it presents a woman getting drunk. Now, if any purpose were answered by this, it might, perhaps, be defended. As the piece is now constructed, however, the device is wholly without value. Half-asleep the heroine hears the villain tell a story about the abduction of a daughter of the Comte de Toulouse. She makes neither head nor tail of this, and nothing whatever comes of it.

MR. BURNAND'S "Betsy," a version of the "Bébé" of MM. Hennequin and de Najac, is an instance of successful adaptation. All that is unsuited to English tastes is expunged without the sacrifice of the mirth-producing power of the original such a process ordinarily involves. Among the three-act farces which have grown during recent years into public favour "Betsy" is entitled to a high place. Its action is ingenious and comic, its characters are clearly defined, and its dialogue is mirthful. The interpretation also is satisfactory, Messrs. W. J. Hill, Lytton Sothern, Standing, Giddens, and Maltby, Mrs. Stephens, and Miss Lottie Venne playing with admirable spirit and equal *ensemble*. It is long since a piece of this class has had equally strong claims upon the public or obtained a more genuine and uncontested triumph.

Sept. 27, 1879. VERY little less than a quarter of a century can have elapsed since the "Beaux' Stratagem" of Farquhar was last presented in London, the scene of the latest performance being that of the first production, the Haymarket. During that period the taste for our elder comedy and the capacity to act it have both declined, until the chance of a piece of this description finding its way, in anything like its integrity, to the stage seemed hopelessly remote. In life, however, a place has always to be left for the unforeseen, and Farquhar's masterpiece has once more pushed

its way on to the boards. What is most remarkable, moreover, is that it is not revived as a makeshift, but is produced with a luxury and costliness of *mise en scène* that prove a long run to be expected. In pronouncing a verdict upon a performance of this kind there is every temptation to leniency. That we have lost the grand style of acting is conceded. The power adequately to present the wits and *beaux* of the comedy of the Restoration has by universal consent disappeared for a couple of generations. In the management of a dress rapier and "the nice conduct of a clouded cane" our actors have lost all chance of practice, and the traditions of consecutive centuries seem likely to perish for want of opportunity for their transmission. The question then arises, Are we to leave the comedy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to rank only as literature, or are we still to give it such interpretation as can be hoped under the present conditions of the stage? Of the alternatives the latter is preferable. So dependent is the drama for its full force and value upon the illustration it receives from action, almost any form of representation is better than none at all. As it is, the period during which the "Beaux' Stratagem" has been lost sight of as an acting play is so long that much which it is desirable to preserve in tradition is neglected, and stands a chance of being altogether forgotten. The performance that is given at the Imperial has something more than the mere interest attaching to a curious revival. It may be true that few of the male characters are thoroughly realised. Nevertheless there is much in separate impersonations that can be seen with pleasure, and the performance all round is creditable. Besides dressing so as to be quite out of the general picture, Mr. Farren, who played *Archer*, was too heavy in style. Mr. Ryder's *Sullen* was, on the other hand, far too light, and Mr. Edgar's *Aimwell*, though painstaking and in a sense, satisfactory, was wanting in distinction. Mr.

Lionel Brough, however, as *Scrub*, realised thoroughly the old style of comic acting; and two young actors, Mr. Kyrle Bellew and Mr. Bannister, the latter a *débutant*, contrived to give much distinctness of outline to the parts, *Gibbet* and *Foigard*, they respectively played. Miss Litton has caught much of the spirit of old comedy, and in her delightfully quaint and picturesque dress looked the very image of a lady of fashion of a time a little subsequent to the action of the play. Miss Carlotta Addison realised thoroughly the part of *Cherry*, the "Maid of the Inn," and Mrs. Stirling as *Lady Bountiful* and Miss Meyrick as *Dorinda* were also satisfactory. The entire interpretation may be seen with satisfaction by those who are prepared to make allowance for altered conditions, and do not apply too vigorously to modern performances the standard of acting of which they know only by hearsay. Meanwhile the mounting of the "Beaux' Stratagem," in spite of one or two pardonable anachronisms, is better than the play has previously received. Much of the wit and the slyness disappear with the removal of the indecency, but enough of both remains to render the performance attractive from a literary standpoint. It must be remembered, however, by those who know Farquhar only in the closet—and these, of course, include the vast majority of playgoers—that the play they have is an acting version, modified at the caprice of successive actors, and is not the "Beaux' Stratagem" they find in the collected works of Farquhar. Much is omitted, as inconsistent with the taste of to-day, but a little, too, is added which would probably have been not less inconsistent with the taste of yesterday.

AFTER narrating, in "Jacques le Fataliste," the cruel revenge of Madame de la Pommeraye upon her false lover, the Marquis des Arcis, whom she induces to marry a prostitute, believing her a woman of unblemished virtue,

Diderot puts into the mouth of one of the characters some reflections upon the event. "Notre hôtesse," says *le maître*, addressing the gossip by whom the story has been told, "vous narrez assez bien ; mais vous n'êtes pas encore profonde dans l'art dramatique. Si vous vouliez que cette jeune fille intéressât, il fallait lui donner de la franchise et nous la montrer victime innocente et forcée de sa mère et de la Pommeraye ; il fallait que les traitements les plus cruels l'entraînassent, malgré qu'elle en eût, à concourir à une suite de forfaits continus pendant une année ; il fallait préparer ainsi le raccommodement de cette femme avec son mari. Quand on introduit un personage sur la scène, il faut que son rôle soit un ; or, je vous demanderai, notre charmante hôtesse, si la fille qui complotte avec deux scélérates est bien la femme suppliante que nous avons vue aux pieds de son mari ? Vous avez péché contre les règles d'Aristote, d'Horace, de Vida, et de Le Bossu."

Justification is accordingly afforded Mr. Sutherland Edwards for idealising and exalting the character of the heroine of the story, which he took from M. Sardou, who took it from Ancelot, who took it from Diderot. The result is not, however, favourable to the views of the *maître*, since the proposed change has been made by Mr. Edwards, and the character of the heroine remains unsympathetic. A great loss to the interest of the story is, moreover, involved in transferring the action into modern times. A French marquis of the times of the Regency, in spite of the ridicule Molière had cast upon his predecessors, was somebody, and a *mésalliance* was a matter of importance. A French marquis of to-day may marry a kitchen-maid without causing a ripple on the waters of Parisian life. "Fernande" accordingly, in the English version, does not take now a firmer hold upon the public than it did nine years ago, when, six months after the play of M. Sardou was given in Paris, it was presented by

Mrs. John Wood at the St. James's. Ingenuity has been displayed in the treatment and the dialogue is not without merit. The whole is, however, unsympathetic and unsuited to English tastes. Its reception was accordingly stormy.

The rôle of *Clotilde*—the Madame de la Pommeraye of Diderot—first taken in England by Mrs. Hermann Vezin, was given by Miss Heath, whose control of pathos and tenderness is of little account to balance her artificial and affected style. Miss Rosa Kenney played with tenderness and feeling the rôle of *Fernande*, assumed at the St. James's by Miss Fanny Brough, who made in it her *début*. Mr. Wilson Barrett gave a popular impersonation of *Pomerol*, and Miss Amy Roselle obtained an enthusiastic reception as *Georgette* his wife. Mr. Coghlan, reappearing after an absence in America, was natural and manly as the *Marquis des Arcis*, and made the most of a poor part.

A SLIGHT and amusing comedietta by Mr. A. W. Pinero, entitled "Daisy's Escape," has been produced at the Lyceum. Its plot deals with the substitution of one lover for another by a young lady who is eloping from a rigorous guardian. In this trifle a thin vein of genuine comedy is shown. The author, as the rejected lover, gives a fresh and effective picture of selfishness and vulgarity. Miss Alma Murray shows distinct appreciation of the character she is called upon to play, and acts agreeably and well. The chief portion of the past week's entertainment has consisted of "The Bells," with Mr. Irving in his strangely powerful impersonation of *Mathias*. Bayle Bernard's farce of "The Boarding School" has also been given, with Miss Florence Terry, Miss Pauncefort, and Mr. Barnes in leading characters.

Oct. 4, 1879. IN "Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy" M. Sardou seems to have aimed at giving a companion picture to his "Nos

Bons Villageois". That he has been less successful in dealing with middle-class pretension than with peasant greed may perhaps be attributed to the fact that he has followed less closely in the steps of Balzac. If, however, the eccentricities of Pont-Arcy are less animated than those of Bouzy-le-Tétu, the action to which the latter contribute is neither less interesting nor less dramatic than that for which the former are responsible. It may be urged that the incidents of the "Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy" are unnatural and strained. A like defect interferes, however, with the claim to consideration of nine-tenths of the modern drama. A close application of the laws regarding probability would in the end—since human passions are, after all, limited, and the combinations to which, in connection even with circumstance, they can lead are not inexhaustible—put a stop to the greater portion of dramatic production. It is conceded accordingly that a certain measure of stupidity or carelessness shall be permitted in human action; that Othello shall not give Desdemona opportunity to bethink her how she lost her handkerchief; that Romeo shall not, before proceeding to the tomb of the Capulets, call and ask for explanations of the Friar.

Another and a conspicuous weakness of the dramatic work of M. Sardou, as of M. Scribe, is illustrated in the fact that the whole story—that of a son, to save his mother pain, assuming the responsibility of a *liaison* of his father, and through filial piety shipwrecking his own happiness—depends upon a thing that might at any moment be set right. Just as a scrap of paper supplies the basis of "Les Pattes de Mouche," a bag which, in the ordinary course of things, the owner would have held in a clutch almost convulsive, furnishes the groundwork of "Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy".

Granting, however, M. Sardou what he claims, that inadequate motive shall be accepted as adequate both as regards incident and moral obligation, it is easy to be

enthusiastic over the manner in which difficulties are faced and conquered and the utmost dramatic value of the materials is expressed.

Mr. Albery has been moderately successful in treating the play. The full value of the stronger scenes, and a measure of the charm belonging to the whole, are preserved, and the pleasant atmosphere M. Sardou has assigned the piece is retained. Equivalents for some of the comic characters are obtained, and much witty dialogue is supplied. On the other hand, the attempt to roll into one two of the *bourgeoises* of Pont-Arcy is a failure, and some of the dialogue is wholly unworthy. When Mr. Albery talks of a clock through shame hiding its face with its hands, he employs a joke so venerable nothing short of absolute poverty would, one might think, have induced a dramatist to take it; when, again, he makes his hero, in answer to a question from a lady as to the name of a flower, reply it is a *tussis convulsiva*, he is not more original, and he detracts terribly from the character of the speaker, since a man thus impolite to a visitor in his house forfeits his right to the character of a gentleman.

Of the four acts constituting the play the first is explanatory and amusing; the second is preposterous, unnecessary, and wearisome; and the third and fourth are dramatic and moving. A complete sacrifice of *vraisemblance* is accomplished by the negotiations for the purchase of a country newspaper, and the characters concerned in it are outside the framework of the picture. Not until the third act does the story commence to unfold itself. From that point to the end the action is progressive and stimulating.

An admirably competent interpretation is afforded. Mr. David Fisher, jun., plays a part that is unnecessary; Mrs. John Wood a second that is farcical; and Miss Augusta Wilton a third that is repulsive. All three act

satisfactorily, and Mrs. John Wood is so highly comic, it is with regret we declare that dramatic fitness demands she should disappear from the play or be reduced to a nonentity. Mr. Conway, who made a startling revelation of earnestness and passion, carried off the honours of the representation with his performance of *Sir Geoffrey Deene*, the Fabrice de Saint-André of the original. Miss Marion Terry was a sympathetic and attractive heroine, and Mrs. Vezin, as the mother in whose interest the son accomplishes his sacrifice, showed her known power. A small character part by Mr. Arthur Cecil was a fine piece of acting. Mr. Forbes-Robertson and Miss Linda Dietz also rendered valuable assistance.

MR. IRVING's performance of *Sir Edward Mortimer* in "The Iron Chest" is an instance of absolute realisation. Never, probably, since the days when, according to Colman's noted preface to the printed version, Kemble came on to the boards, "habited from the wig to the shoe-string with the most studied exactness," has the play been seen to equal advantage, or the character received such precise embodiment. As a picture of despair and desolation, sombre and funereal, illumined by bursts of passion which rend and convulse the frame, and are yet as evanescent as they are powerful, the performance is marvellous. The grimmer aspect of Mr. Irving's powers has never been seen to equal advantage, and if the performance is not so fine as the Louis XI. it is only because the comic element is wanting. Mr. Irving's face is capable of being charged with any amount of tragic expression, and it is not easy to conceive a picture of remorse burning fiercely behind the closed shutters of a resolute will more powerful than that he presents in the scene in which he sets himself to work a cruel and deliberate vengeance on the boy whose curiosity has stirred his fears. As Mr. Irving's acting shows in

this instance little trace of the mannerisms to which we have been used, and as the arrangements of scenery have been studied intelligently with a view to producing the strongest effect, the performance has remarkable interest.

A question arises, Is this thing worth doing at all? Colman's "Iron Chest" is one of the worst plays of the worst epoch in our dramatic annals. The great central figure which Godwin in his "Caleb Williams" supplied is there, and in this is found the attraction which has commended the character to every tragedian except Macready. It is sadly dwarfed, however, from the original. For this Colman may not be greatly to blame, since the elaborate psychology which is the chief feature in the novel is not to be preserved in a play. Such operatic surroundings as Colman supplied are contemptible to the last degree. The blank verse would do discredit to Tate or Brady and the whole workmanship is pitiful. Still the fact remains that the central figure is strong.

Mr. Irving has altered the play in some respects, and has carried the action from the period—about 1635—in which Colman placed it to the close of the last century. Any liberties whatever are permissible in the case of a *pasticcio* like this. The dialogue, it should, however, be observed, is no longer suitable to the characters. There is in much of the play a seventeenth century lacquer, which is inconsistent with the time to which the action is now transferred. References to "Canary" have no appropriateness at that time, and a butler who swears by our Lady, talks of dancing a galliard, and uses such expressions as "a pestilence on't," "a perilous good aim," and the like, is an anachronism. Supervision should, indeed, have been bestowed upon the whole dialogue.

If, however, Mr. Irving wished to do the best with a character quite within his reach, he should have dismissed altogether Colman's absurd setting, and have

employed some living dramatist to extract from "Caleb Williams" another and an altogether different play. The character of Sir Edward Mortimer is finely conceived. Where it comes short of greatness is only in the fact that the psychological analysis is not ample, and that the workings of mind which lead to the result are not shown with sufficient clearness. There is strange power in the idea of this great and generous man, whom dread forces into tyranny; and whatever is subtlest and most remote in the mental workings that operate this transformation, Mr. Irving is qualified to express. Some of the minor characters are well played.

ONE novelty was produced on the opening night of the Oct. 11, 1879. St. James's. "Monsieur le Duc" belongs to a class with which the French stage is familiar, but which as yet has scarcely won its way into favour this side of the Channel. In the midst of his customary environings the Duc de Richelieu receives a visit from a young lady, who comes bringing him a recommendation written on her deathbed by her mother. After his wont—as he is seen in fiction—Richelieu bets lightly on the immediate dishonour of his visitor. The bet is lost. In the subject of his gallantry he discovers his own daughter, the legitimate offspring of a marriage he had contracted in boyhood. Immediately after its accomplishment he had been imprisoned by his father's influence, and his wife, who was no fit mate for his fortunes, had been spirited away. Here is a thoroughly French intrigue, full of suggestion of "Mademoiselle de Belle Isle" and other plays. The treatment is, however, robust rather than delicate, and the whole comes short of that distinction which is to a work of this class what bouquet is to a wine of Médoc, or, to use a still more gastronomic illustration, what the flavour of truffles is to a *pâté*.

Whether the fault is in the piece or the acting is not easy to tell. The actors look well in an interior exactly recalling those provided at the Théâtre Français for similar pieces, and wear their costumes with more ease than is ordinarily displayed under similar conditions. Mr. Hare is, indeed, a perfect picture of the *Duke*. The whole, however, has not the *cachet* indispensable to this class of work. Quite otherwise is it with the second piece—"The Queen's Shilling". In this everything is good. Mr. Hare's *Colonel Daunt* is a thoroughly fine performance, Mrs. Kendal is delightfully saucy as the heroine, and Mr. Kendal and the other officers of the regiment of lancers are as natural as they can be. No very high order of talent is required to give an adequate representation of this version of "Le Fils de Famille". Such demands as it makes are, however, met, and the picture that is supplied of modern life has all conceivable *vraisemblance*. A large audience, including a good many individuals known in literature and art, accorded a warm welcome to the opening performance.

Nov. 8, 1879. THE performance of "The Merchant of Venice" at the Lyceum is remarkable in many respects. Considered as interpretation it is superior to anything of its class that has been seen on the English stage by the present generation, while as a sample of the manner in which Shakspeare is hereafter to be mounted it is of highest interest. In thus speaking we do not confine our praise to what may be called the upholstery portion of the accessories. An immense stride has been made in the direction of a thoroughly satisfactory presentation of the early drama, and the foundation is established of a system of performances which will restore Shakspeare to fashion as an acting dramatist, and will render attractive to the student, whatever his culture, that

observation of the acted drama of Shakspeare which is indispensable to a full estimate of his powers. A background which is at once striking, natural, and unobtrusive is supplied, and from this the action receives added intelligibility. Constant attention has been paid to the trial scene, and one actor of eminence after another has contributed something to the fidelity or the dramatic value of the representation. Mr. Irving has, however, found something new and striking to add to this scene, and the presence, in the crowd of spectators of the trial, of a knot of eager and interested Jews, among whom the sentence condemning Shylock to deny his religion falls like a thunderbolt, and the explosion of popular wrath against this body which the result of the trial produces, are instances of ingenious and intelligent explanation and comment in the shape of action.

There are those doubtless who will regard such additions as futile or worse. Their effect upon the vivacity of the interpretation and upon the interest of the public is, however, great, and there is nothing whatever in the play itself to render such things impertinent. It has been the fashion of late to close the performances of "The Merchant of Venice" at the end of the trial scene, and to bring down the curtain upon the defeat and despair of the Jew. A natural result of this course has been to foster the delusion that the play is a tragedy. It is in truth a romantic drama; it might even be called a tragicomedy set in a fantastic framework which is indispensable to the plot. That a very serious interest is inspired in Shylock is true. It is, however, highly improbable that an audience of Shakspeare's time, when prejudice against Jews still existed, felt the tragedy of the story as it has since been felt. In the very dislike to the Hebrews which animated those whose fathers or grandfathers might have seen them burned at the stake was found the cause why the notion of tragedy never

suggested itself to early audiences. That Shylock to the time of Macklin was presented as a comic character is known, and the description by Macklin of the difficulties he encountered in trying to substitute the Jew of Shakspeare for that of Granville, Lord Lansdowne, is one of the most familiar of theatrical anecdotes. When the last act is put on the stage, the extreme sadness of the central interest ceases to be felt. Lord Lansdowne in his last act presents Lorenzo and Jessica rejoicing over Shylock's enforced apostasy. Shakspeare, with infinitely higher taste, makes no mention of the Jew except when Nerissa instructs Lorenzo and Jessica that they are chosen his heirs. To an audience, indeed, of the time of Shakspeare the penalty undergone by Shylock can scarcely have presented itself as very serious. Taking, then, "The Merchant of Venice" to be what it is, a play founded on one of the stories of the "Pecorone" of Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, with the substitution of the story of the three caskets, which comes from the "Gesta Romanorum," for that of a species of Circe who in the Italian story sends her lovers to sleep by means of a potion and by a not too modest expedient robs them of their treasures, it must be classed with the romantic comedies. As such it lends itself readily to the kind of additions now made, and the revels in the Venetian streets and the pictures of a gay and frolic life are altogether in keeping. It may be incidentally mentioned, as it is a fact on which little if any stress has been laid, that Shakspeare's indebtedness to the Italian novel does not end with the character of Shylock and the attempted exaction of the forfeit. The scene of the framework or underplot, which in the story is more closely welded into the main action than in the play, is Belmonte, and the court of the lady, who is a widow, is not unlike that of Portia. Her waiting-woman, moreover, is wedded by Giannetto, the hero, to his friend Ansaldo, who may

answer to Gratiano. Of none of these things is there any trace in the story from the "Gesta Romanorum," which is supposed to have supplied the idea of the caskets.

Mr. Irving's presentation of Shylock is in his later and happier vein. It is too restless in the scene with Tubal, the violent shaking of the head and one or two similar things suggesting snappishness rather than passion. In some respects, however, it has singular merits. The final exit of the Jew is one of the most impressive things we can recall; the comedy passages are introduced with full effect, and much melancholy dignity is assigned Shylock. The entire performance is thoughtful and scholarly, and likely to raise Mr. Irving's reputation. Whether in one belonging to a persecuted race there should be so open valiancy of hate, or whether more servility is to be expected, is a matter on which keen controversy may be waged. The beauty of Miss Terry's Portia is incontestable. An instance of perfect exposition is presented, and the business introduced is always subtle, poetical, and significant. Got up in exact imitation of those stately Venetian dames who still gaze down from the pictures of Paolo Veronese, Miss Terry looks in every respect the Lady of Belmont of the story or the play. Her delivery is just and pure, and her performance is a remarkable instance of interpretation. In other respects the representation is noteworthy for general excellency of bearing and for *ensemble* rather than for the merit of single performances. Mr. Johnson's *Launcelot Gobbo* deserves, however, praise for its moderation, and the *Jessica* of Miss Alma Murray, the *Bassanio* of Mr. Barnes, the gallants (*Salanio, Salarino, Gratiano, and Lorenzo*) of Messrs. Elwood, Pinero, Cooper, and Norman Forbes form portions of a representation that may be pronounced satisfactory. There were shortcomings in the delivery of the verse, and there were other respects in which

improvement might be effected. So considerable an advance is, however, this representation upon anything previously seen, censure seems churlish. The reception of the performance was enthusiastic.

IN striking contrast with the performance of "The Merchant of Venice" at the Lyceum is that of "King Henry V." with which Drury Lane reopened. In this general effect is aimed at and obtained, and little pains are taken with individual characters. Mr. Rignold, who plays the king, has a fine presence, a manly bearing, and a good delivery. His subordinates are, however, for the most part unused to niceties of rhythm, and a knowledge of the fact that the play was in blank verse, unless it rested on previous information, was scarcely to be obtained by observation. There was, however, plenty of bustle and action, and the whole was a pageant of a kind which at Drury Lane has long been accepted as a Shakspearian performance. Once more the assumption was renewed, and the spectacle, albeit one act passed in dumb show, was received with favour.

Dec. 27, 1879. WHEN the essentially undramatic character of the story of Boccaccio on which Mr. Tennyson has founded his play of "The Falcon" is taken into account, there is cause for surprise at the fact that it has been several times adapted for the stage. In England, so far as can be ascertained from existing records, no version earlier than that of the Laureate has found its way to the boards. In France, however, in which country the best-known stories of the "Decamerone" are those popularised by La Fontaine, no fewer than four versions were given in the course of the last century. The earliest in date was a one-act piece, entitled "Le Faucon," produced in 1719 at the Théâtre Français. The authorship of this belongs to Marie-Anne

Barbier, a poetess of Orléans, a portion of whose dramatic fame, including that resting on the authorship of this piece, has been assigned to l'Abbé Pellegrin. Six years later "Le Faucon; ou, les Oyes de Bocace," by Louis François Delisle de la Drévetière, was given at the Italiens. This is extended into three acts, an old *fabliau* concerning a youth who mistook women for geese being blended with the novel of Boccaccio and the customary characters of Italian comedy in Paris, Arlequin, Pierrot, and Colombine being introduced. Sedaine also gave to the Italiens a new version in one act of the story of the Falcon, to which Monsigny supplied the music. This is an agreeable piece, with one or two especially dainty lyrics and *ariettes* in Sedaine's best manner. The hero of "Le Faucon" of Sedaine was played by Clairval. Lastly, just before his imprisonment on account of the political allusions in his comedy "La Chaste Suzanne," Radet gave to the Vaudeville a one-act piece, also entitled "Le Faucon". A play entitled "Le Faucon" is assigned in the Catalogue des Comédies of the Nouveau Théâtre Italien to Fuselier or Fuzelier, the well-known collaborator of Lesage in the pieces intended for the Théâtres de la Foire. This piece is, however, obviously the same we have ascribed to the Demoiselle Barbier.

No special interest or importance attaches to the information, since Mr. Tennyson has made no use of the works of his predecessors, and is assumably unfamiliar with them. Still the works out of which such information can be dug are, in England, at least, difficult of access, and, as there is always some measure of curiosity concerning the use to which well-known fables have here been put, these facts, which can be found in no single authority, may be acceptable. The names and the more marked attributes assigned by Boccaccio to the two principal characters, Federigo degli Alberighi and Monna Giovanna, are preserved; the peasant's wife, who in the novel acts

as companion to the lady, is replaced by an old woman, the foster-mother of the hero, and a species of squire and domestic is supplied in the person of her son. There is little departure from the Italian story. Federigo pays his court to his mistress, and shows her a chaplet she has worn and discarded, which has since been his companion in danger and almost in death. He sings to her a love-song of his own composition, and accompanies himself upon the "gittern," and in many ways lays siege to her heart. The sacrifice of the falcon completes her conquest, and in the very words Boccaccio puts in the mouth of the heroine she accepts his love, declaring that she "would rather have a man that stands in need of riches, than riches without the man" ("Io uoglio auanti huomo, che habbia bisogno di richezza, che richezza, che habbia bisogno d'huomo"). It is, of course, necessary for dramatic effect to make the surrender immediate instead of postponing it, as does Boccaccio, until after the death of the son in whose behalf Monna Giovanna has come to ask for the bird. The verse in which the story is told is good, nervous, and free from superfluous ornament, the best lines being those addressed at the outset by Federigo to his falcon. It is natural, and not very important, that the scene of the ruined cottage in which the action passes and the difficulties of Filippo in providing the required delicacies should suggest the kindred perplexities of Caleb Balderstone: it is regrettable that the pleadings of Elisabetta, the foster-mother of the hero, in favour of Federigo should at one point recall those of the widow Melnotte in the "Lady of Lyons". The reception of the piece was exactly what might have been expected, amounting to a *succès d'estime*. The setting is very attractive, and the whole representation has remarkable colour. There is little opportunity for the display of acting. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal look exceedingly well. It is perhaps hypercritical to say that an Italian lady, such as is Monna

Giovanna, who, besides being one of the richest dames of Florence, is also *delle piu belle* and *delle piu leggiadre*, might receive homage as a matter with which she was so familiar that it begot in her not the slightest feeling of a necessity for rebuke.

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